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New Statesman

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DOWN THE DRAIN

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New Statesman

New Statesman
14-16 Farringdon Lane
London EC1R 3AU
Tel: 01-253 2001
Editorial: 01-253 2003
Telex: 28449
Cables: Newstat, London EC1
©1984 Statesman & Nation Publishing Company Ltd and contributors
Published and distributed by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Company Ltd

Subscriptions: Lesley Bridgmount, Cecilia Milton
Circulation: Liz Cooper, Tim Freeman
Display advertisements: Michael Roberts 01-253 2001
Classified advertisements: Laura Berryman, David Jones 01-251 5487

Subscription Rates
Surface mail:
UK £32, Overseas £36

Air mail:
Europe £36, Middle East £41, Africa, India, South America £45, Australasia, Far East £49, USA $79, Canada $92

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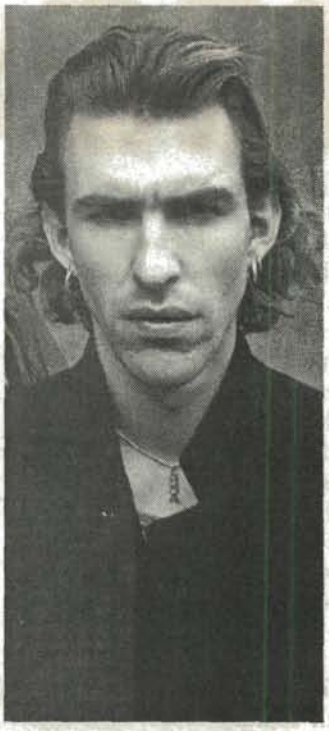

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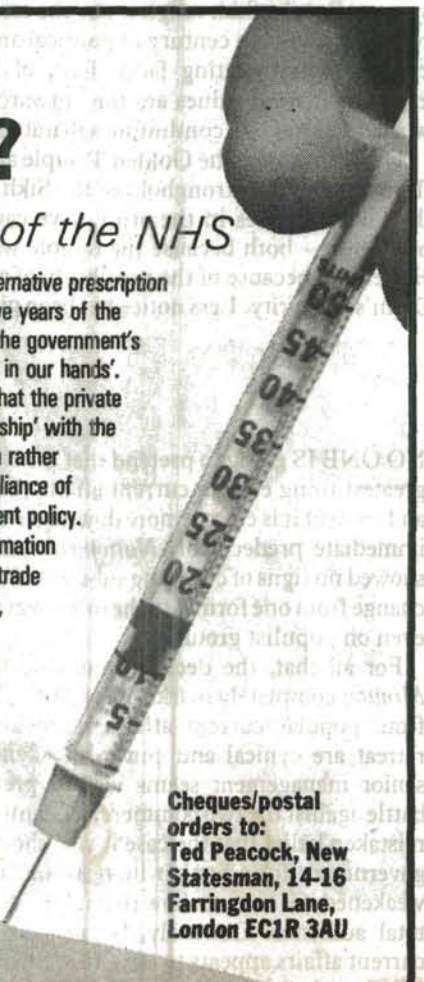

Cheques/postal orders to:
Ted Peacock, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU

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New Statesman

Vol 107 No 2778 15 June 1984

Massacre at Amritsar

MRS GANDHI has reaped her whirlwind in the Punjab. For party political reasons she has tried in the past to destabilise state governments which were opposed to her Congress Party. In Kashmir, she has tried to dislodge the dominant National Conference Party. In the Punjab, she has given comfort to Sikh extremists in order to embarrass the moderate leaders of the Sikh political party, Akali Dal.

As a result, Sikh extremism went out of control. Subsequent attempts by the Congress Party government in Delhi to negotiate a 'moderate' political solution to the crisis in the Punjab were doomed to failure. The initiative had been captured by the men of the gun. As in so many other similar situations, any Sikh politician seen coming to any terms whatsoever with Delhi is by that fact discredited. (With ironic overtones from the time of her father Pandit Nehru's fight with Mahatma Gandhi against the British Raj, perhaps the most constructive thing that she is doing to restore the political credibility of the Akali Dal leadership is to put them into prison.)

Sikhs have provided a combative element in the politics of the Indian subcontinent since the 16th century. Founded in the Punjab as a sect of dissenters from classic Hinduism by a Hindu quietist who was in the employ of a Muslim, the religious divergences from Hinduism became less marked over the centuries, though Sikhs continued to reject the Hindu caste system. But the Sikh religion was the essential base for the strong revival in the 19th century of political and cultural Sikhism. The custom of not cutting facial hair, of wearing the turban, of extolling martial values are the outward signs of a sect that has wished to stress its continuing separate identity in India.

The storming of the Golden Temple at Amritsar by the army to flush out the last stronghold of the Sikh terrorist movement and the Sikh mutinies in the army have captured the international headlines — both because the temple was for Sikhs the Holy of Holies and because of the possibility of a complete breakdown of Delhi's authority. Less notice has been given to the fact that this is only one of a series of incidents where the central government in Delhi is failing to contain serious communal violence.

Last year there were the serious riots in Assam, where the Hindu population has come to resent the presence of Muslim migrants from Bangladesh. Throughout the northern states and the Hindi-speaking hinterland of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar relations with the Muslim minority have been at best tense for some time, marked by sporadic communal violence. But then last month Bombay erupted in a wave of communal riots on a scale that has not been seen since the subcontinent was partitioned on independence in 1947. At least 230 people were killed and perhaps a further 50,000 left homeless. Bombay used to be renowned for its single-minded dedication to commerce and its sophisticated capacity to accommodate a large Muslim minority. But the local ultra-Hindu movement — the Shiv Sena — has in the last 15 years succeeded in whipping up agitation for a 'better deal' for the true Hindu citizens of Bombay and its surrounding state of Maharashtra. The looting and burning of the Muslim quarters of Bombay was a deliberate flexing of Hindu muscle on the streets, which the weak Congress Party state government was unable or unwilling to control.

The current events in the Punjab are part of this pattern of rising Hindu 'nationalism'. Hindus — even the educated and middle class — have been brought to think of themselves as a neglected minority in a country where they in fact form the large majority. The hand of Saudi Arabia and other rich Arab countries is seen behind the building of mosques and rumours of Muslims being armed. Much has been made of the conversion of some Harijans (untouchables) in south India to Islam.

Mrs Gandhi and the Delhi authorities have been responding to this political mood. The events at Amritsar may in the long run turn out to be another key failure in the long effort to make India into a centrally governed nation state. In the short run it will have done wonders for Mrs Gandhi's standing with Hindus in the polls. □

BBC gives up trying

NO ONE IS going to pretend that the BBC's *Sixty Minutes* is the greatest thing ever in current affairs journalism. Indeed in form and content it is clearly more down market and less serious than its immediate predecessor, *Nationwide*. Since its audience ratings showed no signs of climbing substantially above *Nationwide*'s, the change from one format to the other was not in retrospect justified even on populist grounds.

For all that, the decision announced last week to axe *Sixty Minutes* completely marks the end of the long retreat by the BBC from popular current affairs television. The reasons for this retreat are cynical and cowardly. Cynical, because the BBC's senior management seems wholly preoccupied with a ratings battle against the two commercial channels in the almost certainly mistaken belief that the case it will shortly have to present to the government for a further increase in the TV licence fee will be weakened if it cannot show that it has more than 50 per cent of the total audience. Cowardly, because its lack of commitment to current affairs appears to stem from the fact that this aspect of the BBC's television output causes the most trouble with the government of the day — e.g. Mrs Gould's celebrated discomforting of Bossy Roberts over the *Belgrano* on *Nationwide*, or *Panorama*'s exposé of the extreme Right's infiltration of the Tory Party — to name but two recent examples.

It is easy in television to make worthy programmes that no one watches and pap programmes that get high viewing figures. The challenge that the BBC used to accept was to try to find ways to examine, explain and analyse current affairs in a format that attracted something approaching a mass audience. ITV1 and 2 now do it better. There seems to have been a collective loss of will on this score in the labyrinth of bureaucracy and internal politics that has grown on top of BBC TV.

As a result after next month, for the first time since 1956 when the famous *Tonight* programme was established, the BBC's main channel will carry no proper daily current affairs programme of any kind. Symbolically, the BBC's current affairs centre at Lime Grove has been renamed 'Topical Productions' and the lion's share of its resources has been devoted to competing at breakfast time with TV-am. □

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A dose of Victorian Britain for Bradford

A DYSENTERY epidemic has been raging in Bradford with 1,191 cases notified since February which compares with 2,084 cases in Britain as a whole last year. While a Tory MP has linked the disease with the local Asian population and the council has denied any connection between the disease and poor housing, the victims are predominantly poor, living in bad conditions and overwhelmingly white.

Although the epidemic is now almost under control, with 30 cases being reported last week, Bradford still accounts for half the country's total cases. The disease is overwhelmingly associated with damp conditions and poor housing and a campaign, Brad-Fad (Bradford's fight against dysentery), has been formed in reaction to health officials appearing to blame the epidemic on personal hygiene. Brad-Fad is calling for emergency powers to be used to help affected families and for the matter to be discussed at a full council meeting. Three-quarters of those affected are five to eight year-olds and most of the adults infected are young mothers.

The outbreak is concentrated on council estates on the outskirts of the city among sections of the white working class where unemployment levels are highest. Ninety-five per cent of the victims are non-Asian, although more than 10 per cent of the population in that age group are of Asian origin.

Despite this, Keighley's Tory MP Gary Waller sparked off a row by calling for Asian children returning from the Indian sub-continent to be screened on entry to Britain. Brad-Fad reacted by accusing Waller of making racist remarks.

In fact, the bacteria involved, *Shigella Sonnei*, is thought to have originated in Norway, and the first recorded case in Britain was in 1925. The organism thrives in cool moist conditions and occurs more frequently in the winter months. The height of Bradford's epidemic was in mid-March when 177 new cases per week were being reported.

Britain's last major outbreak of the disease was in Hull, which had 1,452 cases recorded between November 1982 and the end of last month. Hull's district medical officer, James Dunlop, reported that *Shigella sonnei* dysentery 'is a disease more commonly found in poor socio-economic conditions where standards of hygiene are lower and close bodily proximity more common'.

Bradford's housing chair, Richard Wightman, has meanwhile issued a statement this week that the city's present dysentery epidemic is not related to housing conditions and health officials are continuing their public campaign reminding victims to wash their hands after they have been to the toilet.

Anne Durham

Sharp taste of tactics to come

FAR-REACHING CHANGES in policing tactics are revealed by the handling of demonstrations in central London on three successive days last week. In particular, the police are:

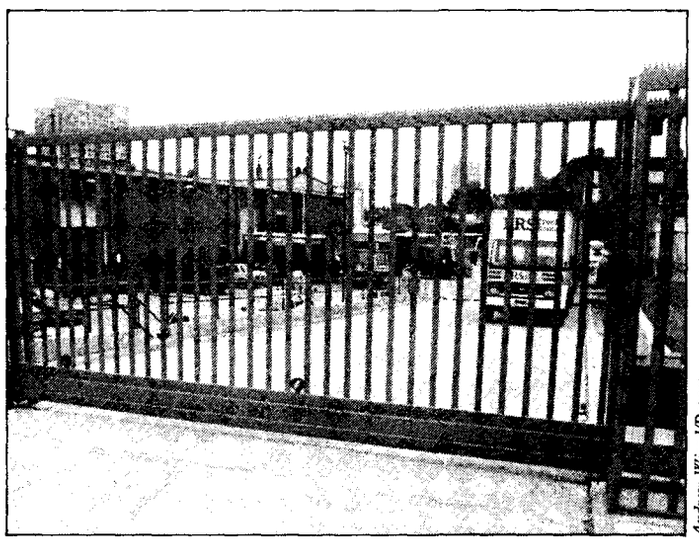
- holding people in specially fitted-out 'charging centres' not linked to particular police stations;
- arresting large numbers of people who are later released without charge;
- preventing people from demonstrating in front of embassies by invoking the Vienna convention;
- using the cautioning system in a discriminatory way.

During the anti-nuclear protests on Saturday, 214 people were arrested. Several were taken in vans to at least two 'charging centres' in South London which are police warehouses normally used for storage.

One of the buildings, in Union Road, Clapham (above), has long been the centre of local protests from residents who were told that the building was only to be used as a warehouse when it was built several years ago. In fact, it has been used as an assembly point for early morning police training.

One of the people taken to Union Road, Belinda Coote, said: 'The place was very sinister. It had four "suites" each with room for a vanload of prisoners. Nobody knew where we had been taken to'.

The other charging centre used was a modern warehouse in Walworth (almost next to the Labour Party's HQ). Errol Reid of the local Southwark Police Monitoring Group told the *NS*: 'Just because there's a big demonstration doesn't mean that emergency wartime procedures should be brought in.'



Andrew Ward/Report

Special 'charging centre' in Union Road, Clapham

Scotland Yard refused to reveal how many such charging centres have been prepared but admitted they could be used to hold people for a long time: 'The building in Union Road does not have facilities for overnight stays but other such centres do,' a spokeswoman said. Everyone taken to them on Saturday was released quickly with no charge or even a formal caution.

On the miners' demonstration on Thursday, there were 134 arrests and 111 people charged, contrasting sharply with only 44 charges from 214 arrests on Saturday.

On Friday at the regular weekly Anti-Apartheid Movement picket at South Africa House, 24 people were arrested for standing directly outside the building rather than agreeing to move to the side as requested by the police. Commander Howlett of 'A' Division said that under the Vienna Convention, demonstrators are not allowed in the front of embassies, although there have been such demonstrations for decades.

Steve Bassam of Camden Council's police unit said: 'With the Police Bill which will give the right to hold people for up to 96 hours without charge currently in Parliament and a White Paper on public order in preparation, I see these changes in police tactics as a dry run for what is to come.'

Christian Wolmar

Clause 4 shakes 'em up

NEIL KINNOCK'S favourite pressure group, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC), has been hit by the resignation of two leading members from its executive. They are protesting at the increasing role of the LCC as a policy think-tank for the new Labour leadership and at the 'takeover' of the LCC by Clause 4, a 'pragmatist' faction formed to counter Militant in student Labour organisations in the mid-1970s.

The LCC began life in 1978 as a broad alliance of the non-Trotskyist left pressing for greater democracy within the party. But in his resignation letter Barry Winter of Independent Labour Publications (the old Independent Labour Party) expressed concern that the LCC no longer represents a broad section of the left and is dominated by Clause 4 which now has nine members on the 20-strong executive. Judy Sadler, who resigned partly for personal reasons in April, also expressed unhappiness at the political drift of LCC and its closeness to Kinnock.

The last straw was the appointment of a Clause 4 member, Paul Convery, as paid LCC secretary and the election of John Denham, also Clause 4, as chair in March. But Clause 4 says its members on the LCC executive, who include Nigel Stanley (Robin Cook's assistant) and Alan Haworth (the secretary of the Parliamentary Labour Party office), do not vote as a group. Clause 4 has 170-200 members; the LCC has nearly 1,000.

However, the split has been caused as much by Clause 4 of the Labour Party constitution as by Clause 4 the organisation. The LCC embarked on a rethink of Labour's basic values and long term aims at a conference in Liverpool earlier this month. The 'Long Term Aims Project' has aroused alarm in some quarters that the LCC was trying to 'rewrite' Clause 4, which commits the party to common ownership. In fact, all the draft statement does is repeat a statement agreed at last year's LCC AGM that Clause 4 'should be consistent with a small private sector'. But Judy Sadler says in her letters of resignation: 'I do not think the time is ripe for us to be arguing for a small private sector. It is at best an irrelevance, at worst we are falling prey to the increasingly acceptable ideology of private enterprise.'

The charge that the LCC is too close to Kinnock is likely to be blunted at an executive meeting this Saturday, which will consider an eight-point criticism of the Labour leadership's style and policy, particularly its failure to back the miners and Liverpool council.

John Rentoul

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Second strike against NHS cuts

TWO HUNDRED cleaners at a second London hospital have walked out following the threat of a hospital cleaning contract which would reduce working hours by nearly a half and lose 100 full-time jobs.

Domestic cleaners at the 650-bed Hammersmith Hospital timed their action to start on Wednesday to coincide with a London-wide day in support of 82 cleaners at Barking Hospital, who have stood on picket lines for 12 weeks rejecting a similar contract. The Hammersmith contract would reduce the number of full-time staff from 123 to just 15 and weekly working hours from 6,170 to 3,410.

Catering staff at Hammersmith are joining the strike for at least three days. Ancillaries at Middlesex, Guy's, Moorfields and Newham hospitals, with others in Westminster and Tower Hamlets, are staging strikes to implement a national NUPE conference decision backing the Barking women.

The contract which has angered the Hammersmith staff represents the *most* favourable deal that is likely to be agreed. It was drawn up on behalf of the NHS direct labour team which is bidding for the £900,000 cleaning contract against six private contract firms. 'This is only the in-house tender. I shudder to think what the contract tenders will be like', said local NUPE branch secretary Lydia Fraser.

Hammersmith special health authority decided to put its cleaning out to competitive tender last July. The unions boycotted the tendering process on principle so the NHS contract was drawn up by management. According to administrator David Marlow, it is 'realistic and viable', and the health authority makes no secret that it would prefer it to succeed against the contractors. But well-known firms like Crothalls, Exclusive and Hospital Hygiene Services who have put in bids are becoming adept at offering huge paper savings which often mean a higher work-rate for fewer staff with poorer standards.

The final decision will be taken on 18 July. Lydia Fraser said up to £½ million savings had already been made with union co-operation. Many of the cleaners are one-parent families on low pay. Fraser takes home £66 a week, which includes Sunday double-time working.

Meanwhile at Barking, national NUPE officer Bob Jones held talks last week with Crothalls, who employ the Barking cleaners, to try to settle the dispute. This angered the cleaners because he went over the head of the local union official who had negotiated previously.

The outcome was a tentative offer to give the women their individual hours back with with a cut of about 30 jobs. It was emphatically turned down by the cleaners. They believe sooner or later the health authority will have to give Crothalls their cards, not least because of a community health council report which spoke of finding live and dead, decomposing cockroaches in the hospital kitchens on an official visit.

Phil Cohen

Opening a new Irish front

ONE HUNDRED and twenty members of the National Front, over half from Britain, marched through the strongly loyalist town of Coleraine last weekend as part of the new Front's leadership's second determined bid to recruit members in Northern Ireland.

The old Front leadership under John Tyndall and Martin Webster always regarded Northern Ireland as an ideal recruiting ground and sought to build up their links with the UVF and UDA loyalist paramilitary organisations. But despite their regular attacks on Irish republican meetings in Britain and their 'Ulster is British' campaign, Front membership remained very low, with fewer than 40 members in Northern Ireland. Their recruitment among loyalist paramilitaries was hindered by the fact that Webster was brought up as a Catholic and suspicions that a senior member of the National Front leadership had 'fingered' several UVF members operating in Britain in the early 70s, leading the police to a major arms haul and long sentences for the UVF men.

But these obstacles have been removed with the overthrow of Webster and the rise of the new Strasserite faction led by Joe Pearce, a former editor of the Front's youth wing's paper, *Bulldog*.

Last weekend's march was on the theme of 'Set Britain Free From the EEC' and was designed to show, according to Iain Anderson the Front's deputy chair, that the NF 'was a real political party and not just a pressure group'. It followed an earlier march last year through East Belfast on the more predictable theme of 'Smash the IRA'.

The Front's policies on Northern Ireland are a bizarre mixture of their racist views and hatred of the IRA with the hope that the Republic will eventually rejoin the 'British family of nations'.

But despite the new leadership and the attention of Pearce himself who has tried to build links with loyalist organisations in London, their recruitment efforts have been no more successful. The Front's activities have, however, spawned an anti-fascist movement in the North which held a 600-strong counter-demonstration and rally in Coleraine on the same day.

Kevin Toolis

MISCELLANY

Father figure

Paul Routledge, *The Times's* Labour Editor, has a few industrial relations problems of his own. Last Thursday, in his capacity as Father of Chapel (shop steward, in plain English) for editorial staff at *The Times* and its supplements, he attended a special meeting of the Farringdon Branch of National Union of Journalists. The meeting, which was held in the upstairs room of a pub, passed a motion 'regretting' Routledge's acceptance of a pay offer which would end the 12-year-old parity between journalists on *The Times* and their colleagues on *The Times* supplements; in future there will be a £1,200 differential in the minimum wage. After heckling for a while, Routledge went downstairs to drink with some striking miners who were in town for the day. When the rest of the branch joined him at the bar, Routledge grabbed the *Sunday Times* journalist Peter Wilby by the lapels and asked him to step outside; Wilby wisely declined. Routledge then made the same suggestion to Jake Ecclestone, deputy general secretary of the NUJ, who had chaired the meeting. Ecclestone, who is something of a pacifist, walked out onto the pavement of Farringdon Road with his hands behind his back. Routledge kicked him in the knee and groin before being restrained by two colleagues from *The Times*'s labour staff. Later that afternoon Routledge announced that he was resigning as Father of Chapel because of a lack of support from his members. And then, with the cares of office removed from his shoulders, he sat down to write an article about the miners' strike.

Crazy paving

'The government have had the courage of their convictions as far as abolishing metropolitan counties is concerned. If anything they have not gone far enough. Rationally, there was never a case for the metropolitan counties — nor do I believe there is a case for the shire counties.' These words appear in the latest issue of *Public Money*, out this week. The author is David Alton MP, a spokesperson for the Liberals, who have spent most of the week trumpeting their leading role in opposing the Bill paving the way for abolition in the House of Lords.

Out of the shadows

Lord (Bertie) Denham, the fiction writer (author of *The Man Who Lost His Shadow*) who doubles as Tory chief whip in the Lords, played a straight bat when chided about bringing in previously unseen 'backwoodsmen' to beat off by 20 votes Monday night's challenge to the election-suspending 'Paving Bill'. 'They are all regular attenders,' he said cheerily. 'They all come at least once or twice a year.'

Tin coin summit

It is not often than we agree with the *Mail on Sunday* on anything. But *Mail* reporter Peter Simmonds was overheard asking why the economic summit had cost the taxpayer £2.6 million, and why Mrs Thatcher had not applied her usual austerity measures to the 24-hour free food and drink for the 3,000 representatives of the world's media. Everything possible was done to keep the hacks happy — from a free nylon tie provided courtesy of Burtons (no, said press officer Ian Kydd, they didn't assume all journalists were men but Burtons hadn't wanted to provide scarves) to a gold coloured tin coin, designed by the Royal Mint to mark the occasion. We can only assume that the toys were to distract their attention from asking themselves why they were being 'fed' news like sitting ducks, with all of five minutes to question Geoffrey Howe on the three major summit statements, or why Reagan only appeared for a few minutes on the last day or why they were treated to 'live' coverage of police guarding Lancaster House on the world's biggest video, part of British Telecom's showcase of latest communications gadgetry. But by Saturday afternoon the free food (it was a 'British food' special on Saturday lunchtime) seemed to have given one *New York Times* journalist indigestion. He woke up to ask Sir Geoffrey if the unsubstantial platitudes produced by the summit were not an embarrassment to Mrs T and the host government. 'No', said Sir Geoffrey. 'Next question'.

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British ships help apartheid oil flow

BRITISH SUPERTANKERS are shipping embargoed Arab oil to South Africa, according to investigations by the Amsterdam-based Shipping Research Bureau (SRB). Its latest report, published last week, identifies five secret deliveries by tankers owned or managed by UK companies.

All Arabian Gulf states have a strict embargo on South Africa. Yet SRB, set up by Dutch anti-apartheid groups to monitor sanctions, reports that South Africa imports 12 million tons a year of oil, mainly from the Arabian Gulf.

Three of the deliveries involving British companies were accounted for by a single supertanker, the 269,000 ton *Cast Narwhal,* which made clandestine trips to South Africa in August 1981, February 1982 and June 1982. Further inquiries by the *New Statesman* have revealed that these sanctions-busting voyages originated in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Oman and the UAE.

The *Cast Narwhal* is managed by Glasgow-based Denholm Ship Management. The company told SRB that it only provided 'technical management' and was not involved in the purchase or sale of the cargo.

Two other British-controlled tankers breaking the Arab embargo are named. The 263,000 ton *Jamunda,* owned by Lancaster Shipping, was on charter to the London-based OTC oil company. It delivered a cargo of Saudi Arabia oil to South Africa in March 1981. In the same month, the 257,000 ton *Port Hawkesbury,* which flies the British flag, shipped in a consignment of oil from the Gulf. The *Port Hawkesbury* is managed by the UK subsidiary of Canadian Pacific.

The SRB report also tells the astonishing tale of how a cargo of embargoed Norweigan oil was smuggled into South Africa via Teesside. The oil had been pumped from the Norweigan Ekofisk field to the British port, where it was loaded onto the Saudi Arabian tanker *Al Malaz* on 25 April 1981. The ship sailed for Rotterdam, where the oil was transferred to the UK-registered *Cast Fulmar* (managed by Denholm).

The *Cast Fulmar* left the Netherlands on 27 April giving its destination as the US. But instead the ship turned south and headed for Durban. The oil which was owned by the Dutch oil trader Vitol, was unloaded in contravention of Norwegian government policy. The authorities in Oslo are investigating this breach of Norway's embargo.

The British government has consistently vetoed UN resolutions calling for oil sanctions against the apartheid regime and there are no restrictions on UK ships trading with South Africa.

However, the UK Merchant Navy and Airline Officers Association (MNAOA) recently asked its members to report all oil deliveries to South Africa. MNAOA general secretary Eric Nevin says that 'the shipowner who defies a UN ban today is the owner who reneges on crew wages tomorrow and operates an unsafe ship the day after.'

The National Union of Seamen and the Transport & General Workers Union have taken even stronger action. Three months ago they formed a new group called Maritime Unions Against Apartheid along with groups from Denmark and Australia in an attempt to cut off South Africa's oil. NUS general secretary Jim Slater said at the launch that 'governments have failed to enforce the oil embargo, so it is up to the international trade union movement to take the initiative'.

Martin Bailey

Alliance recovers ground

THE LIBERAL/SDP ALLIANCE has recovered some of the ground in local by-elections that it lost during the winter. During the six weeks from 3 May to 7 June, the Alliance captured 11 of the 25 seats fought, a gain of eight. (Only *by*-elections are considered here including those held on 3 May, local election polling day).

The main victims have been the Conservatives who lost seven of the 12 seats they held previously. (One Liberal gain, in South Buckinghamshire, was the result of an uncontested election: although it was previously a Tory ward, no Conservative stood this time.)

Labour has also suffered three losses — and made one gain — in the past six weeks. The full gains and losses are as follows:

	Seats defended	*Seats lost*	*Seats gained*	*Seats held now*
Con	12	7	1	6
Lab	10	3	1	8
Lib	3	—	5	8
SDP	—	—	3	3

Labour has done better in terms of votes. In the 18 three-cornered contests the distribution of votes was:

Labour	21,899	41.2%
Lib/SDP	14,902	28.1%
Conservative	14,637	27.6%

These raw figures are misleading. Most of the votes in three-cornered contests were cast in strong Labour wards in Strathclyde, Plymouth and Nottingham, and in wards where Liberals have polled well in the past (Lambeth, Manchester, Calderdale, Sutton). So although the Tories have continued to do badly, their standing is not as bad — or Labour's as good — as the raw figures suggest.

In London, Labour continues to gain ground. So far this year there have been contests in 20 London wards, with almost 60,000 votes cast. Labour has won 37.5 per cent (up 7.4 compared with votes in the same wards in the 1982 borough elections), the Conservatives 31.1 per cent (down 10.1) and the Liberal/SDP Alliance 28.5 per cent (up 3.2).

Peter Kellner

Council scoreboard

3 May

Sedgemoor DC	LAB GAIN (Con)
West Sussex CC	CON GAIN (Lab)
Erewash DC	Lab hold
Strathclyde Reg	Lab hold
Plymouth DC	Lab hold
Bucks CC	Con hold
Tendring DC	Con hold
Lothian Reg	Con hold

10 May

Wrexham Maelor DC	LAB GAIN (Con)
Wimbourne DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Staffs. Moorlands DC	SDP GAIN (Con)
Nottingham DC	Lab hold
Staffs Moorlands DC	Lab hold

17 May

Blyth Valley DC	SDP GAIN (Lab)
South Derbyshire DC	SDP GAIN (Con)
Lambeth LBC	Lab hold
Gtr Manchester CC	Lib hold
Blyth Valley DC	Lib hold

24 May

South Bucks DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Calderdale DC	Lib hold

31 May

Hounslow LBC	Lab hold
Bracknell DC	Con hold

7 June

Sutton LBC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Rhymney Valley DC	LIB GAIN (Lab)
Kent CC	Con hold

East End violence on trial

SIX MONTHS after the Newham Eight trial, in which eight Asian youths were acquitted or given light sentences, a new round of trials on racial violence in East London is about to begin.

On 5 May, 58-year-old Kuncheen Ganga Dharan, was attacked by three white youths outside the Tropicana wine bar in Barking Road, East London. He claims he was called a 'fucking paki', pushed to the ground and kicked unconscious. He spent seven days in hospital, recovering from a fractured skull, broken thumbs and the loss of five teeth.

The attack was subsequently reported in the *Newham Recorder* as revenge for his refusal to give the youths money. The information was supplied by the police although Ganga Dharan never suggested robbery as a motive. Indeed, Ganga Dharan is insistent that he was never asked for money and still had £25 in his pocket. Newham's community liaison officer, Superintendent Austin Ferguson, states that no racial incident was recorded for that date.

This is the latest incident in what the East End Asian community is seeing as a new phase of racist aggression. According to local monitoring groups, the National Front has patched up its feud with the British National Party and the two are trying to reclaim their old stomping grounds in East and South East London. Support for fascist parties in Newham South at the last election was the highest in Britain. Local Asian organisations believe the police are unsympathetic because of anger over the Newham Eight verdicts.

On 7 April there were three serious assaults on Asian teenagers in Newham. Parvinder Singh, 16, was smashed on the side of the head with a hammer by two white men and a girl following a row in a Wimpy bar. Minutes later, two white men and a girl jumped out of a car and attacked 16-year-old Sohail Butt. Like Ganga Dharan, Sohail's family have heard nothing from the police since the attack. The third attack that day was on 18-year-old Siegfried D'Souza, also by two white men and a girl.

News of the attacks spread quickly and in the evening a group of Asian youths went to the pub outside which Parvinder Singh had been attacked and where they believed NF members gathered. There was a fracas in which pub windows were broken.

In response to this incident, the police picked uo seven Asian youths over the space of a month, including Pervais Khan, acquitted in the Newham Eight trial. They will appear in court on 19 June, mostly on charges of conspiracy to cause criminal damage and causing an affray, but the police say they are considering further charges against them.

Three white youths will appear in court on the same day charged with criminal damage.

Police records for 1983 show 96 'racial incidents' in Newham, while the Newham Monitoring Project logged 156.

Asked to comment on the discrepancy between the two sets of figures, Superintendent Ferguson said: 'Only one group, which I don't want to name, would compile statistics. How they do it I don't know because people report incidents to the police and not anyone else.' Unmesh Desai of the Newham Monitoring Project claims 'People have stopped reporting cases to the police as they are often subjected to passport checks and interrogation themselves.' From the charges in the forthcoming trial, it seems likely that the spate of violence will be presented as standard gang warfare in which racism is only incidental.

Zubaida Motala

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PETER KELLNER Political Editor

Black and White — divide and fight?

THE OTHER DAY I ran into my old Labour Party friends, the ever optimistic Olive Optima and the perennial pessimist Percy Potter. They were having an animated discussion about the role of blacks in the party.

Percy: I just don't understand, Olive, I really don't.

Olive: What don't you understand, Percy?

P: How can they be so blind? In the space of four days, Neil Kinnock, Roy Hattersley and Gerald Kaufman all pour scorn on the idea of a black section in the party. Don't they realise that Labour is taking the black vote too much for granted: unless they do something to increase the voice of the black community, there's a strong danger that it will drift away from the party. God knows, Labour's loyalist vote is small enough without it being whittled away further.

O: I agree that Labour has to keep the black vote. But what makes you so sure that the best way to hold it is to set up a black section?

P: Look, it is common ground that the black community gets a raw deal in Britain — in jobs, in housing, from the police and so on — and that the Labour Party stands for positive action to end discrimination and injustice. Right?

O: Sure, but what has that to do with arguments about a black section? The point is to make certain that the next Labour government carries out its promises — on race, yes, but on everything else too, like trade union rights and nuclear disarmament.

P: Of course. But the trade unions already have lots of clout on the national executive. There are plenty of CND supporters there too. But there aren't any black faces — and there aren't any black Labour MPs either. Just look at the way Russell Profitt has been treated. If he'd been white he would almost certainly be an MP now. But because he's black, he can't get selected.

O: Come on, Percy, I know we hear a lot about Russell these days; but doesn't he protest just a bit too much? I know he failed to get selected for Peckham or Battersea. But it's not as if they are represented by dead-beats: Harriet Harman and Alf Dubs are two of the best Labour MPs in London.

P: But Russell didn't even get short-listed in Peckham. Anyway, the issue is not just about any one individual. Getting on for 10 per cent of Labour's voters are black. Pro rata they ought to have 20 MPs and two or three members on the executive. The point about having black members on the executive, directly elected, is to have people who can speak with first-hand experience and real authority for the black community — and give black people a reason to consider the Labour Party to be *their* party.

O: I can see that in theory; but aren't you overstating the practical effect a black section, with one or two directly elected members might have? Look at the way women are discriminated against — in politics as everywhere else. Almost 50 per cent of Labour's voters are women, yet only 11 out of Labour's 209 MPs are female. By your argument, Percy, you would expect a women's section with representatives on the executive to put things right. But what happens? There *is* a women's section. Five places are reserved for women on the executive. They haven't exactly advanced the cause of feminism, have they?

P: I expect they would argue with that view. But the women's section on the executive is a sham, as you well know. It isn't elected by women's groups — it isn't elected by women at all. You don't have any more say in who gets elected than I do. In fact, I have *more* say, even though I'm a man, because my union is affiliated to the Labour Party, while yours is not: the five are chosen by the whole conference — so the choice is dominated by the overwhelmingly male trade union delegations. Indeed, when an internal party committee recommended abolishing the women's section 15 years ago, it was the right-wing unions that blocked the change: they feared that the committee's proposal — to replace the five women's places by giving an extra two to the union section and three to constituency parties — would tilt the balance of the executive more to the Left.

O: OK, I accept that the choice of the women's members on the executive is determined by right-left power games. What makes you think a directly-elected women's or black section would be any different? Right-left slates are fought over in every section. The whole process of electing the executive is ludicrous: it needs wholesale reform, not an extra battleground for left-right conflict. In any case, I foresee horrendous arguments among our black comrades over eligibility, with votes being challenged, and all sorts of petty squabbles we can well afford to do without.

P: Don't be so bloody patronising, Olive. Black groups within the Labour Party are just as capable as white groups of competent organisation. Why on earth should there be more squabbles than anywhere else?

O: Look, it may be fine at the moment, when black groups, operating informally, decide for themselves who their members are. But as soon as you create a separate national structure within the party's constitution, you have to define who is eligible to join. With other groups, like women, or the Young Socialists, or the trade union section, eligibility is clear enough: it is a matter of gender, age or membership of an affiliated union. But how on earth do you draw the line between 'black' and 'white'?

P: Come on, that's simple. Anyone of Asian, African or Caribbean descent. In practice, it will be largely self-selecting: those people who consider themselves black will join: those who don't won't.

O: For a born pessimist, Percy, you seem amazingly optimistic about the smooth running of a national black section. Don't you realise that as soon as it has any real power, all sorts of people that nobody has seen before will crawl out of the woodwork and say 'I'm black, I demand a vote'.

P: So? If they are black, that will be their right.

O: Ah, but who is to say if they are black or not? Someone who was born in Uganda, say, or the West Indies would be counted, obviously; so, presumably, would someone born in Britain to Ugandan or West Indian parents. I imagine there would be little argument about someone who is half-black, with one immigrant and one white English parent. Then what? Is someone who is quarter-black eligible to join the black section or not? Will we have to scrabble around inspecting grandparents' birth certificates to settle borderline cases? Precedents for bringing racial definitions into politics are invariably ugly — ask any coloured South African, or Jew from central Europe.

P: Hold on, Olive, don't go over the top! We're not trying to reinforce racial inequality, but to remove it. You are talking like the comfortable, Oxbridge-educated middle-class white socialist you are, without seeing how serious the problem is. You're not black: you can afford to indulge in logic chopping. That's fine, as long as you don't expect blacks to vote Labour in future as loyally as they have in the past.

O: I really think you are missing the point, Percy. Labour will succeed or fail in keeping the black vote according to whether it shows it is serious about ending discrimination in jobs and housing, and bringing the police under control. I think we can do that without being sidetracked into messy constitutional change. Anyway, that's not what we came here to discuss. Let's get on and address those envelopes for the European election.

P: Hell, do we have to? How boring. □

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The great oil profits siphon

While other governments have built up substantial capacity for refining oil, the British have let theirs dwindle away. Peter Odell looks at the consequences

DESPITE THE FACT that Britain is the fourth largest oil producer in the world, the oil refining industry here has been cut back by more than that of any other country while British customers pay more for the oil they use than their competitors elsewhere in Europe. In one of those stories so typical of the higher reaches of British policy-making, while other governments have seen to their national interests Britain has, by neglect, allowed the multinational oil corporations to close refining capacity unhindered by government.

When oil was discovered in our part of the North Sea it was expected that most of it would be refined in British refineries. Indeed, there was a 'gentleman's agreement' with the companies concerned that two thirds of our oil production would be refined here. In a report published in 1974 the Scottish Development Agency concluded that an additional 50 million tons of oil would be refined by four new export-oriented refineries. At that time European oil demand was growing at 7-8 per cent a year. Instead, it has declined dramatically and in 1983 was almost 20 per cent less than in 1973. Thus refinery capacity has had to be reduced, but nowhere more than in the UK, in spite of the fact that Britain is responsible for almost three quarters of Europe's oil production.

The oil companies have undertaken sophisticated simulations of the impact on their costs and profits of refinery closures and capacity reductions in the context of their complex international supply, refining, distribution and marketing systems. Such simulations have not, however, necessarily led to decisions which reflect the optimal choice, because a main determinant of the changing pattern of refining in this period of declining need for products has been the varying degrees of governmental pressures on the companies.

Many governments of oil producing countries have made a company's right to produce crude oil dependent on its willingness to refine that oil at source — or to contribute to an expansion of the country's refining capacity. Some potential oil producing countries have made the award of concessions to companies to search for oil dependent on the companies' assurances that, if successful, they would refine the oil in the country concerned — either in a company refinery, or in a state-owned refinery which would be given first refusal on indigenous crude oil.

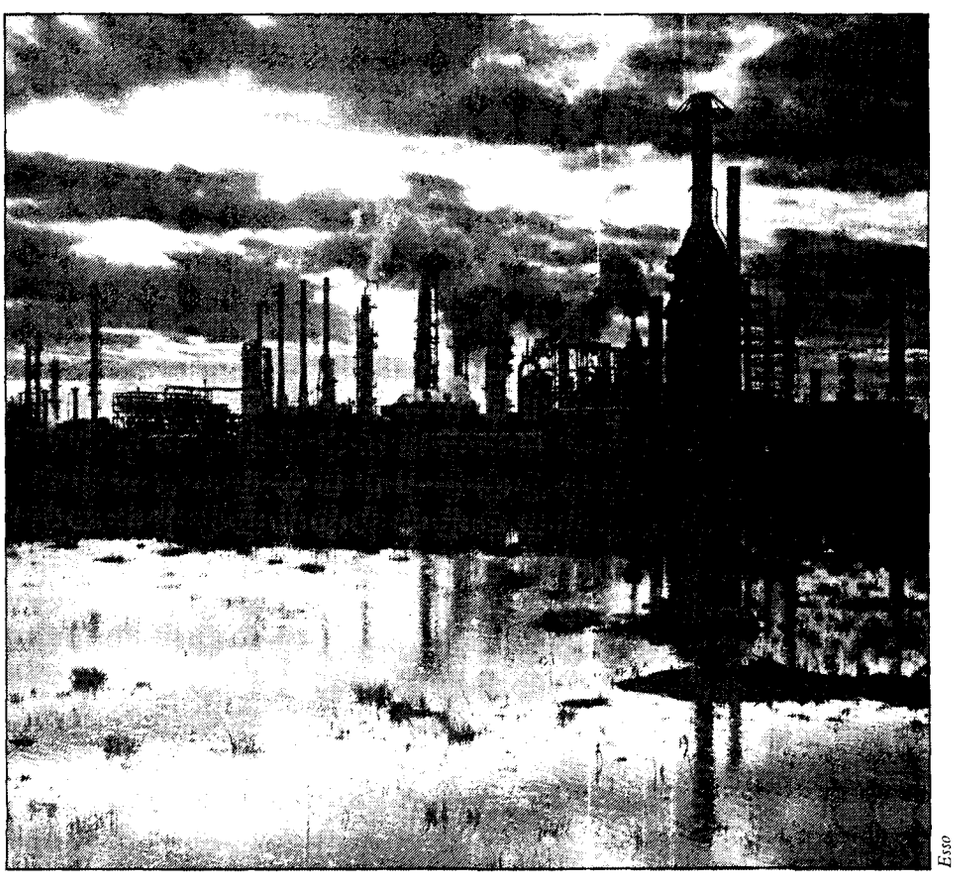
On the other hand, many oil importing countries have protected their refineries against competition from important products and others have applied pressure to limit the closures of refineries either on economic or strategic grounds. Successive British governments since 1974 have not had such policies and have thus created a situation in which part of the refining industry in the UK became an expendable option for companies embarrassed by too much refining capacity in Western Europe, as well as by those which wished to avoid investment in the downstream sector of the industry, in spite of their successful involvement in the North Sea.

As a result, the capacity of the refining industry in Britain has contracted since the mid-1970s by almost 26 per cent — a reduction which is proportionately greater than that in any other country of the world in this period, with but the single exception of Belgium (where not a drop of indigenous oil has been found). Neighbouring countries, with roughly similar post-1974 changes in oil demand, but with no oil production of importance, have had much less severe cutbacks in their refining industries — ranging from 18.5 per cent in the case of France, to a little under 20 per cent in West Germany and to 21 per cent in the Netherlands, where most of the capacity was oriented not to the relatively small local market, but to exports.

Meanwhile, every other major oil producing country in the world, and a number of much smaller producers than the UK, has enjoyed refinery expansion, often on a considerable scale. The other large North Sea oil producer, Norway, with less than one quarter of the UK's production, built a new refinery which virtually doubled the country's refining capacity and is now in the process of expanding it by over 50 per cent. The Norwegian oil ministry, an inter-ministerial committee and two independent foreign consultancy firms agreed that the expansion 'would be economically worthwhile and that there would be a profitable market for the products of an enlarged, upgraded refinery, while the project itself would provide badly needed jobs in an area where unemployment by Norwegian standards (about 4 per cent) is high' (*Financial Times* 6 January).

The British government, believing that the refinery closure decisions have to be accepted as they are the result of 'objective' market forces, has not used the same arguments, even though we suffer a much greater under-utilisation of resources than Norway.

As a result, our imports and exports of oil products were nearly identical in 1978, but by 1983 imports were 35 per cent greater. Since 1978, the proportion of North Sea production which has been exported as crude oil has risen



Esso

Oil refining: a sunset industry?

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from 43 to 59 per cent. The argument that we export 'high value' North Sea crude and run 'low cost' imported crudes through our refineries is invalidated by the fact that the unit value of our crude oil imports and exports was just about the same in 1982 and 1983.

Whether this situation represents the impact of transport costs, or the vagaries of transfer pricing between sister companies in multinational oil corporations, 'market forces' certainly do not appear to be operating in our favour. In fact, they are leaving the country strategically weak. The Director General of the UK Oil Industry Association explained in a letter to the *Financial Times* last October that the jump in oil product imports in 1982 was the result of the 'exceptional demands made by the Falklands conflict'. So we now no longer have the domestic capacity to supply our own products in times of crisis; British refineries have not even been able to supply the additional fuel oil that the CEGB is buying to produce more electricity from oil-fired power stations because of the miners' strike. This oil has had to come from Rotterdam — and the USSR.

LABOUR'S RECORD was no better. Between 1974 and 1979, when oil production was building up and when there was intense international concern over the security of oil supplies, Britain could have obtained especially favourable conditions for sales of oil products to Western Europe from its existing refineries or from increased refinery capacity. Unfortunately, the negative attitude of the Labour government towards the EEC prevented the negotiation of long-term preferences for British refineries. So the rationalisation of the West European refining industry has proceeded with no special consideration for the UK, which is responsible for 90 per cent of EEC oil production and 25 per cent of its oil supply. Would any other government in Europe have thrown away a hand as strong as that in respect of such a strategically important industry?

It has been argued that Britain is better off with less refinery capacity as the refining industry in Europe is essentially uneconomic, so that maintaining or expanding it increases costs and, therefore, prices. If this were true we should be enjoying the lowest prices for oil products in Western Europe. On the contrary, the prices charged to Britain's industrial, commercial and domestic users of fuel oil and heating oils have generally been 10-15 per cent higher than the average for the EEC for many years, and occasionally have been up to 25 per cent higher. Since oil prices have a major influence on all energy prices, this disadvantage has allowed UK gas and coal (and, hence, electricity) prices to be set at levels higher than elsewhere in Western Europe.

The need for 'downstream' investment in oil processing in Britain is further emphasised by the argument that having a large proportion of oil increases the value of the pound and so tends to price British manufactured goods out of international markets: the least we could do in these circumstances is to create jobs by adding value to the crude oil produced at home. It's a story of amateurish and inadequate government, unable to bring itself to challenge the oil companies' decisions, so frittering away one of our few national advantages. □

COMMUNISTS

The Party fights back

Sarah Benton on the latest battle over the *Morning Star*

WHATEVER THE outcome of the conflict over who should edit the *Morning Star*, last Sunday's London AGM of the People's Press Printing Society made it quite clear that the two wings of the Communist Party cannot be united. So deep are the differences (and so bitterly and personally felt) that both sides can only stay in the same party so long as each thinks that it has a chance of defeating the other. While the prospect of governmental power and mass influence provides a centripetal force for the fragmenting Labour Party, no such inducement exists for the Communist Party.

Aggregate voting figures for the series of six regional AGMs show that the shareholders, most of whom are in the CP, were evenly split. Of the nine resolutions which the PPPS management accepted for discussion, only the first — for the appointment of a Moscow correspondent — was carried. This is how the CP's executive committee (EC) 'advised' members to vote. The most telling result was the rejection by 1382 to 1308 of resolution 9, which declared confidence in the editor (Tony Chater), assistant editor (David Whitfield) and existing management committee of the PPPS.

Interpretation of the voting figures for candidates for the management committee is less clear cut. There were six vacancies on the 15-seat body. Ken Gill, most prominent leader of the hard-line faction, came top of the poll with 1495 votes. Three other hardline candidates — Joe Berry (1399), Ken Brett (1393) and Anne Field (1391) — were also elected. Only two of the EC's five candidates were successful — Chris Myant, whom the EC want to see as editor, and George Bolton. Ernie Roberts, Labour MP, came bottom of the list of 11 serious candidates with 1277. If the Glasgow AGM had not been disbanded, it is estimated that the *Star* team would have got an extra 200 votes and the EC an extra 400. This would have been more than enough for the EC to have got all its candidates elected.

THE PARTY'S Eurocommunists arrived in belligerent mood for the London AGM last Sunday, which accounted for half the 3000-odd votes cast. They clustered on the steps outside the Wembley conference centre handing out leaflets carrying the EC's statement on the *Star*. Heckling began as soon as the meeting was opened and there were few moments of absolute quiet throughout the three hour meeting. Early in the meeting one shareholder, urged on by the masses, did storm the platform and gain the mike. This was no young rebel, but George Mathews, the party's eminence grise, ex-editor of the *Morning Star*, retired Head of Press and Publicity and favoured party champion in the 1950s battles against E.P. Thompson and that ilk. He was forced to retreat under threat by the chairman that the meeting would be closed.

Rulings by chairman Pat Hicks were eccentric. Barrister Stephen Sedley QC rose three times on a point of order, but was not allowed to speak on the grounds that the meeting was quite orderly. Mr Sedley had wished to question the chair on the refusal to take any votes by show of hands, a ruling which does not allow the conduct or agenda of a meeting to be challenged. It was instituted at the recent Manchester AGM of the PPPS, after the Glasgow meeting which was closed by the chairman after he lost a vote by a show of hands.

Fearing that the London AGM would also be declared invalid (although voting breakdowns show that the *Star* supporters had a majority in London), the EC had decided that it would not press for a vote on getting its resolution onto the agenda paper. Amongst other things, the resolution called for the removal of Tony Chater as editor, a motion which the PPPS management committee declared was an improper interference by shareholders with its powers of management.

Without such a resolution to discuss, the political issues at stake hardly reared into active life. The *Star* team insisted that there was no political conflict — only a question of supporting the Survival Plan for the paper. Under this they are buying a new print machine and hope to earn £20,000 a week through printing 'four medium sized trade union journals', thus relieving their dependence on party fund raising. Detailed questions by Paul Olive, ex-editor of the party's defunct fortnightly paper and Sally Davison, assistant on *Marxism Today*, on the exact size of such profitable journals ('as long as a piece of string' replied PPPS secretary Mary Rosser) helps explain the big vote against the Survival Plan.

In a combative speech from the floor, CP General Secretary Gordon McLennan went further than he has before in declaring that it was politics, not money, at stake. Except for the Left Labour supporters of an independent *Star*, the choice was between which political tendency would control the Communist Party. Given the styles and beliefs of the two sides, it is an ironic accident of institutional politics that it is the hardliners who have emerged as the champions of a broader and more independent paper and the Eurocommunists as the defenders of the party's control.

Until recently, the Stalinists were as critical of the paper's editorial stance as were the Eurocommunists. If Tony Chater stood anywhere, it was in the bureaucratic heart of the party. However, the hardliners' markets of Left trade unionists and Eastern Europe have proved irresistible to the *Star* management, as has their rejection of 'bourgeois' journalism in favour of 'communist truth.'

Nothing that happened at the AGM is going to change the paper's editorial style, nor can it restore the paper to the party. All that the party can do now is to expel *Star* leaders from the CP or see what powers a Special AGM can exercise. What the AGM has done however is restore a sense of political purpose to the leadership who are now spoiling for the fight which the Eurocommunists have been urging on the leadership for years. □

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NORTHERN IRELAND

Partial justice

Mary Holland on the embarrassment at Ulster judges' frank support for 'shooting to kill'

DO THE SECURITY forces in Northern Ireland operate a 'shoot to kill' policy against people suspected of IRA involvement? Is the judiciary in the province now politically motivated to a degree that 'the whole legal system is heavily biased against Catholics' — to quote a leading Catholic lawyer?

To both these questions James Prior answers a vehement 'No'. There has never been a 'shoot to kill' policy, he says, nor will there be while he is Secretary of State. As for the Ulster judges, they are — and will remain — quite independent.

Yet last weekend the Irish foreign minister, Peter Barry, himself a passionate opponent of the Provisional IRA, spoke of 'widespread concern throughout Ireland' about the circumstances of a series of killings by the Northern security forces in November and December 1982. He added that remarks made recently by a High Court judge in Belfast were 'entirely unacceptable and unworthy of a decent judicial system.'

He was referring to comments made by Lord Justice Gibson, explaining his decision last week, to dismiss charges against three Ulster policemen accused of murdering an unarmed IRA man. Judge Gibson said that he found the three policemen 'absolutely blameless'. He would like this finding to be put on their record together with his own commendation 'for their courage and determination in bringing the three deceased to justice — in this case the final court of justice'.

On the issue of the Ulster judiciary's political attitudes, Messrs Prior and Barry are probably a great deal closer in their views than their public statements suggest. The Northern Ireland Secretary knows just how damaging the political fallout from recent court decisions is, in which members of the security forces, who have admitted to opening fire on and killing unarmed IRA men, have not only been cleared of murder charges, but have been praised for their deeds. This dents the credibility of the government's policy in bringing them to court, and incenses the Catholic community.

The most immediate effects of Judge Gibson's comments, which have caused fury right across the Catholic community, may be to tip the balance in favour of Sinn Fein in this week's EEC elections and cost Social Democratic and Labour Party candidate John Hume his seat in the European Parliament.

In the longer term they threaten any hopes for joint Anglo-Irish co-operation on security. All this week the Irish government has been explaining that the process of extraditing offenders wanted for terrorist offences to the North, which was started so adroitly with the handing over of Dominic McGlinchey to the RUC, will be much more difficult in future.

This latest crisis of confidence in the administration of justice started with the trial of three members of the RUC charged with murdering Eugene Toman, a member of the Provisional IRA, in November 1982. Toman was killed along with two other Provisionals when, according to police, their car broke through a security roadblock in Lurgan, Co. Armagh. Whether they did defy a roadblock is disputed, but as the three accused policemen did not take the witness stand it is difficult to assess the evidence.

All photos: Pacemaker Press

From top, left to right: Eugene McMonagle, Francis McColgan, Sean Burns, Seamus Grew, James Reilly, Patrick Elliott, Eugene Toman, Roddy Carroll

What is known is that the police fired 109 bullets at the car, killing all three men. Toman's body was found outside the car and in court the chief state pathologist, Professor Thomas Marshall, suggested that he must have been killed either when he was getting out of the car or was already outside it. All three IRA men were unarmed and no weapons were subsequently recovered.

Judge Gibson's decision came only a few weeks after the acquittal of another RUC constable, John Robinson, for the murder of Seamus Grew, a member of the Irish National Liberation Army, in Armagh in December 1982. This killing bore the hallmarks of a deliberately planned ambush. In court, Constable Robinson revealed that the police had issued false statements about the circumstances of the killing in order to conceal the fact that members of the RUC had crossed the border into the Republic in pursuit of Grew and his passenger, Roddy Carroll, also an INLA member. Both Grew and Carroll were unarmed when they were killed and Grew appears to have been shot at point blank range as he tried to get out of the car. In court the trial judge praised Constable Robinson for his sharp shooting.

In both these cases reference was made to the activities of a special RUC unit trained to fight terrorists, the Headquarters Mobile Support Unit, or E4A. In court last week during the Toman murder trial a senior deputy chief constable of the RUC, Mr Michael McAtamney, gave evidence about the unit, how police officers are chosen for it and the training they receive. According to reports of the trial, he told Judge Gibson 'Once you have decided to fire, you shoot to take out your enemy.' The Judge asked 'Do you mean permanently out of action?' Mr McAtamney replied 'Yes'.

The Irish government has already made representations at 'official and ministerial level about the operations of this unit. It has expressed particular concern about the series of killings towards the end of 1982 in which suspected terrorists were shot in what seem to have been deliberate 'stake out operations' when they were either unarmed or given no warning of the police's intentions.

But representatives of the Catholic community in Armagh, Derry and Belfast are convinced, rightly or wrongly, that the 'shoot to kill' policy operated by Ulster's security forces extends far beyond terrorists known and wanted for serious crimes. They point to a pattern of deaths which have occurred in Catholic areas since November 1982, in which the majority of young men killed either had no connection with the IRA, or were unarmed at the time they died.

Here is a list of the deaths which have given rise to widespread alarm about a 'shoot to kill' policy. I have deliberately omitted incidents in which the security forces have confronted armed members of paramilitary organisations, who have either opened or returned fire.

11 November 1982 Gervase McKerr, Sean Burns and Eugene Toman. All were members of the IRA, all unarmed when they were killed. No weapons were found in the car.

24 November 1982 Michael Tighe (17), shot at a farmhouse outside Lurgan by the RUC. Police claimed that two men aimed rifles at them. Later

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three 60-year-old German rifles were produced, believed to have belonged to the owner of the farmhouse, a Republican veteran of the Civil War. There was no ammunition. Neighbours say Tighe had no paramilitary connections and was feeding the farmer's dogs while he was away.

12 December 1982 Seamus Grew and Roddy Carroll, both members of the INLA, shot by the RUC in Armagh. A police constable was charged and acquitted of Grew's murder in April. In court it emerged that the RUC had set up an ambush in the belief that Dominic McGlinchey was in the car.

27 December 1982 Patrick Elliott shot in Andersonstown by the British Army. He was running away from a take-away food shop after robbing the till. He was unarmed and had no paramilitary connections.

19 January 1983 Francis McColgan, shot dead by the RUC in Turf Lodge, Belfast, after a petrol station robbery, where a toy gun was found. He had never been involved in paramilitary activity.

2 February 1983 Eugene McMonagle, member of the INLA wanted for questioning by the police. Shot in Derry by a plainclothes soldier. The army claim he was armed, but the RUC say that no weapons were recovered from the scene by the security forces. Neighbours claim he was killed after leaving a relation's house, where he had been babysitting.

16 March 1983 William Millar (the only Protestant in this list), shot by police while driving a stolen car. Weapons were found in the car, but the RUC confirm that no shots had been fired from the car.

30 July 1983 Martin Malone, an 18-year-old labourer, shot by the UDR, while 'hanging about' with teenage friends on a patch of waste ground in Armagh. A UDR man has been charged and is awaiting trial.

9 August 1983 Thomas Reilly, a 'roadie' with the British pop group Bananarama, shot at point-blank range by a British soldier in Belfast. Extensive rioting in Catholic areas followed his death. A soldier was later charged.

8 November 1983 Adrian Carroll (brother of the INLA man Roddy Carroll killed in December 1982), was shot as he left his house in Armagh city centre. He had no paramilitary involvement himself. Seven UDR men from Drummad barracks, Co Armagh, were charged with his murder.

4 December 1983 Colin McGirr and Brian Campbell, both members of the Provisional IRA. Killed by undercover British soldiers while on their way to an arms dump in Coalisland, Co. Tyrone. They were armed, but did not open nor return fire.

12 December 1983 Tony Dawson, shot by an off duty RUC man in the Short Strand area of Belfast. No known paramilitary involvement. RUC man later charged with murder.

30 January 1984 Mark Marron, joyriding in a stolen car when it refused to stop and was shot by the Army. No known paramilitary involvement.

14 May 1984 Seamus Fitzsimmons, shot by the RUC during a raid on Ballygally Post Office. A toy gun was later found. No known paramilitary connections.

THESE DEATHS, for which few people have been charged and none so far convicted, follow in the main a highly disturbing pattern. The vast majority of the victims were killed by locally recruited security forces, members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary or the Ulster Defence Regiment.

In the domestic political context this policy has had the advantage of reducing the numbers of British soldiers killed in Northern Ireland. But it has had a disastrous effect on community relations within Northern Ireland. The conflict between the IRA and the security forces has become increasingly localised, resulting in an atmosphere much closer to that of an incipient civil war.

In these circumstances it should not come as any surprise that Northern Ireland's judges have made it clear that they intend to demonstrate their support for members of the police and the UDR, who bear the main brunt of the fight against the IRA. In doing so, they are only following the example of Mrs Thatcher. She chose to pay a Christmas visit to the UDR barracks in Armagh — where seven members of the regiment had been charged with murder. The feelings of the Catholic minority were made extremely clear to her advisers. As well as this, the Irish government protested to the Foreign Office in very strong terms. Yet, in February this year Prince Philip visited the same UDR barracks.

As far as the Catholic community in Northern Ireland was concerned, the Duke of Edinburgh's visit spelt out a message which they were all too ready to believe. Protestants, who are armed and trained by the British and charged with the duty of preserving law and order, need have nothing to fear if they use those arms to kill Catholics. On the contrary, they will probably be praised for their 'courage and determination' and have their hands shaken warmly by the highest in the land. □

THIS ENGLAND

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□'The Y-front area has been very static for the last three years,' says Trevor Simms, sales and marketing director of the Jockey division of Lyle and Scott, who adds that while Y-front makes up 70 per cent of Lyle and Scott's underwear sales, this figure is decreasing and the proportion accounted for by the Jockey range increasing. 'The interest in men's fashion is filtering through to underwear,' he believes. — *Men's Wear* (Suzanne Pinkerton)

□The walled kitchen garden is a vegetable sanctuary, the first in the country, where rare vegetables threatened by EEC regulations are being saved from extinction. — *What's On, Poole* (Mavis Iredale)

□With Glyndebourne under way and Ascot in a fortnight's time, the champagne season has definitely begun. As usual, everyone will be trying to upstage everyone else with the contents of their wine cooler. — *The Times* (Patrick Lewis)

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MILITANT

Trotskyism Today

Michael Crick, the author of a new book about Militant, predicts an offensive by the tendency in the trade unions

ONE SATURDAY in the summer of 1964 around 30 Trotskyists gathered in the upstairs room of a pub near the Oval in South London. Some of those present had been active in the Revolutionary Communist Party in the 1940s, notably the leader of the group, Ted Grant, but had since decided to work inside the Labour Party. Another much younger group had come down from Liverpool. One or two student comrades had made the journey from the newly opened University of Sussex.

The main decision taken that day by the members of the tiny Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL) was to start a new monthly Marxist newspaper aimed at young members of the Labour Party. There was a major disagreement though over what to call the journal. *Spark, Vanguard* and *Forward* were some of the suggestions, but the title eventually agreed on was *Militant*. The first four-page issue came out in October 1964, a few days before Labour returned to power.

Ted Grant and his colleagues in the RSL have come a long way since then. The 30 or so comrades have grown to more than 5,000; their newspaper is now a 16 page weekly. The name, Revolutionary Socialist League, has fallen into disuse, but under its new title the Militant tendency has become perhaps the most famous of all political pressure groups.

Today Militant's organisation and resources rival those of established political parties. Its annual income of well over a million pounds is as large as the Liberal Party's and greater than that of the SDP. With 140 full-time workers, Militant has more staff than the Liberals and Social Democrats combined. Soon the tendency may have as many employees as Labour itself.

Last September, Militant launched an appeal for £150,000 to buy new premises. The target was reached three weeks ago, and Militant hopes to move into new larger offices in the East End this summer. The move is designed as the first step towards launching a daily *Militant* a year or two from now.

While Neil Kinnock and Jim Mortimer try to grapple with Labour's organisational deficiencies, exposed so cruelly by last year's general election, how they must secretly wish for just some of the dedication and discipline within the ranks of Militant — an organisation which denies it even has any organisation!

The full scale and complexity of Militant's structure is something that never seems to have been fully appreciated within the Labour Party, and particularly by the leadership. Last year, the National Executive expelled five members of Militant's Editorial Board, seemingly unaware that the board contained five other members; and that beneath the Editorial Board (internally known as the Executive) existed a 45 strong Militant Central Committee. Below that in the Militant hierarchy come the full-time workers and beneath them the hundreds of cadres, the elite members of the tendency.

Militant's strong internal discipline, based on the principles of Leninist democratic centralism, ensures that it never has any disagreements in public. Even arguments inside the organisation occur only at the highest levels, on the Executive and Central Committees. It is quite remarkable how Militant members always adopt exactly the same stance in public debate, their discipline causing them to repeat the same arguments, phrases, quotations, examples — and even to use similar accents, speaking mannerisms and hand movements.

Militant has often been compared to an extreme religious sect — the works of Marx, Trotsky, Grant and Taaffe taking the place of the Bible. The weekly routine of selling papers, recruiting new converts, raising money and the endless series of meetings all ensure that Militant comes to occupy its members' whole lives. Militant members end up socialising only with other Militant members. Sexual partners are expected to be members of the tendency. And the whole atmosphere of secrecy and conspiracy helps bind the organisation tightly together. When new recruits are finally initiated after the long process of education and testing they think themselves now part of something special — wanted and privileged.

The dedication of Militant's membership is perhaps best illustrated by the vast sums of money raised every year, mainly from its own members. They are expected to pay a minimum of £5 a week, and anybody who is well paid much more than this. A member on £10,000 a year for instance would give about £60 a week.

MILITANT'S BRILLIANT organisation and remarkable discipline explain why, with relatively few members, it has had such success in certain parts of the Labour Party. Significantly, Militant's greatest progress has come in places where other left-wing alternatives were lacking and the Right disorganised or discredited. The best two examples are the Labour Party Young Socialists and the Liverpool Labour Party; in both cases Militant became the dominant political force.

In the Labour Party Young Socialists, Militant took control in the late sixties, when anybody with views to the right was discredited and embarrassed by the Wilson government; and anybody to the left had either quit the Labour Party, or never joined in the first place. Over 15 years of Militant control of the LPYS, no other group has ever remotedly looked like wresting it away. The LPYS has become more of a recruiting ground for Militant than for the Labour Party — many LPYS national officers frequently go on to become Militant full-timers.

Similarly in Liverpool, Militant's only opposition came from the remnants of the old Braddock machine and Roman Catholic Right. Militant did well in Liverpool partly because of the city's extreme economic and social conditions, but also because no other group on the Liverpool Labour Left offered a credible alternative. And the city's decrepit Labour Party organisation left behind by the boss politicians provided easy ground for Militant's tight discipline and good organisation.

For the immediate future, however, it looks as if Militant's progress within the Labour Party has been checked. The rest of the Left has become increasingly reluctant to back the tendency. Recognising that its position is difficult, Militant has been concentrating more on the trade union movement. Militant appreciates that the unions could provide a new source of untapped recruits, extra funds, and, in some cases, a back door into the Labour Party. More of Militant's resources are being devoted to industrial matters, and more coverage in *Militant* is given to strikes and disputes and the tendency now publishes several separate journals for its supporters in particular unions.

Within the Labour Party, Militant has always shown a particular reluctance to work with other left-wing factions and groups, usually remaining isolated and independent on the Left. But, in the unions, Militant has adopted a different tactic, encouraging and exploiting alliances with others on the Left, such as Socialist Organiser, to good effect. Traditionally the Communist Party provided the main organising force behind union Broad Left groups in the unions, but when the Broad Left's umbrella group, the Broad Left Organising Committee, held a conference in Sheffield in March, the CP was conspicuous by its absence. One estimate was that 70 per cent of those who attended were Militants and *Militant* advertised it as if it were a Militant event.

So far success in the unions has been fairly limited, but recent events in the Post Office Engineering Union (POEU) and the Civil and Public Services' Association (CPSA) show what Militant can do when it uses its organisational abilities. Militant member Phil Holt was the leader of the Broad Left group which last year took control over the POEU and ensured that John Golding lost the union's nomination for the Labour NEC (last week Golding won it back again in a ballot of POEU members). Similarly another hate figure of the Left, CPSA general secretary Alistair Graham, is under threat from the Militant-dominated Broad Left group, which resumed control of the CPSA Executive last month. Representative of the unions' so-called New Realism and a rising media star, Graham is in danger of losing the CPSA place on the TUC General Council.

If the tendency's record in the Labour Party over the last 20 years is anything to go by, Militant will cause more irritation in the unions than it exerts actual influence. And with the tendency's history in the Labour Party to go on, union general secretaries will know better what Militant really is and its organising skills. □

Michael Crick works for ITN's Channel 4 News. *His book,* Militant, *is published by Faber and Faber on Monday (£3.95).*

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MINERS' STRIKE

From the heart

Joanna Head reports on the unprecedented role of women in the dispute

John Smith/IFL

Miners' wives in Barnsley: seeing things differently from Scargill's shock troops

AT 4.00 one morning a month ago, 30 miners' wives left the tiny Rhondda village of Mardy to travel to Barnsley for a very special rally. It was in protest against pit closures. But, for the first time ever, the rally was organised by the women of the Yorkshire coalfield for the women of all the nation's other coalfields. In Barnsley, the Mardy women joined with 10,000 others in an emotional and powerful display of solidarity.

'I think the reason it was so special is because we've all been isolated before. And when we all came together in that hall, so many of us who felt the same. . . so determined . . . we felt so strong.' Another woman said she'd been proud to be a part of that rally. 'If MacGregor could've seen us all there together he'd see what a fight he has on his hands.'

The scale of the miners' wives organisation and participation is unprecedented. 'In 1974 the strike was about money. It wasn't the end of the world if we didn't win. This one is much more important. We're fighting for ourselves, our children and our communities.'

It is in this that the women have subtly challenged the character, indeed purpose, of the strike. Whatever this does to the men's view of their work as leaders, it has changed the women. Before this strike, many of the Rhondda women had never even attended a rally, let alone stood up on a platform and spoken to an audience of several hundred. But that is precisely what many are doing every week. 'It doesn't get any easier. I still get nervous' says Mary Coombes. She is one of the Mardy women who regularly addresses rallies and meetings all over the country. 'I don't make a speech, I just speak from the heart. I tell them about life in our little community, the unemployment that's facing our kids. I try to make them understand it's their fight too.' She believes it's crucial to reach as many sections of society as possible, that the strike can only be won when public sympathy swings towards the miners. In that, she sees things differently from the 'shock troops' of young men.

AT MARDY Strike Centre, groups of women are as active and numerous as the miners organising pickets. They are providing weekly food parcels to all the miners' families in the valley. Regular meetings discuss any financial or practical difficulties women may be suffering. Secretary of the miners' support group, Barbara Williams thinks these meetings are enormously important. 'It gives us a chance to share our problems, get them out in the open. You get friction at home, the family suffers. I know I feel better if I talk about things.' Cathy Williams, also on the committee, believes it's essential to get out of the house to find out what's really happening in the strike and to gauge public opinion. 'If you just sat at home on your own and got all your information from the TV and press you'd get really depressed.'

Although the women receive some funds from the NUM, they have to raise a greater proportion themselves from shops, factories and sympathetic organisations. Much of each meeting is taken up discussing new ways of raising money and food donations. 'A miners versus wives football match,' suggests one woman. 'How about a float with children blacked up as miners going through the streets collecting,' says another. 'It also helps take your mind off your own problems, if you've got something like this to do. All the women agree that far from tempting them to give in, their hardships are only making them more determined. 'We've lost 10 weeks pay so far. It's not going to be for nothing.'

Most of the Mardy miners themselves are delighted by the support they are receiving. But those who don't see it as support for them, but a struggle in its own right have more mixed feelings. Some are alarmed and disparaging about the women's achievements. They say they find it hard to discuss serious matters of strike organisation with the women.

This reaction is not surprising from a workforce and union from which the exclusion of women has been so complete for so long. Of all women, miners' wives are among the most firmly rooted in their traditional role of housewives and mothers. The sexual apartheid of mining communities is almost as pronounced as in the days before pit baths and canteens. Whatever subtle role shifts have been brought about by general social and political change, it is this strike which has forceably raised the possibility of womens equality and independence.

In Mardy, members of the strike committee have doubts about allowing women on picket lines. Barbara, Mary and most others are keen to go. 'I think it shames men more to pass through lines of women than other men,' said one woman. The miners' adage 'real men don't cross picket lines' chorused by a group of women challenges the miner's masculinity, surely the very heart of his self-image.

The women's involvement is lending enormous strength to the miners struggle, a factor whose significance has been largely ignored or underestimated by the press, media and authorities alike. As one woman from the platform of the Barnsley rally put it: 'What we're doing as women is making history. Let's hope that we're setting a pattern for the future involvement of women in political struggle which will show what a formidable force we can be. Without our organised support, this strike can't win. I really believe we're that important to it.' □

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PRISONS

Marking time

Melissa Benn looks at the role of prison work in the regime

IN A SHORT TIME, some of the secrets of the murky world of prison labour will be made public. Following a two year police inquiry into allegations of corruption in prison industries, two senior Home Office officials, from the Directorate of Industries and Farms, have now been charged under the Prevention of Corruption Act. Whatever the outcome of the trial it is clear that neither of the proper beneficiaries has made a gain. Prindus, the organisation set up to organise prison industries and market the products lost £12 million last year — three times the loss of 1979. And few of Prindus's 15,000 captive workers in prisons earn more than the most token wage for their labour. Nor, perhaps most importantly, does prison work 'rehabilitate' prisoners by training them in the social and job skills which would help them to get good 'straight' jobs in the world outside.

In theory prison work is nothing to do with punishment. 'Hard labour' was abolished under the Criminal Justice Act of 1948. Such work is supposed to be part of the package of treatment leading prisoners to 'a good and useful life' as laid down in 1964 under Prison Rule 1. In fact, the type of work available, the conditions under which it is performed and under which it is offered mean it is one of the basic methods of control used in Britain's antiquated prison system. The right not to work is one of the 'privileges' of political status long claimed by Irish political prisoners. Women recently imprisoned for peace activities have been punished for refusing to make war toys, or to work at all.

There are two sorts of prison work available: that organised through Prindus, which is supposedly commercial, and the labour entailed in simply keeping the prison system going. The domestic work of prisons now involves over 7,000 prisoners. Prisoners are also used to repair and maintain the 'prison estate'. And of course prisoners build their own prisons. Channings Wood, was built almost entirely with 'prisoner assistance', although Home Office officials say that they 'are not sure if prisoner labour is being used' on any of the eight new penal establishments being built now. 'Our planning division says it is uneconomic, and is being phased out'. Prisoners fitted out the notorious Special Control Units in Wormwood Scrubs and Wakefield prisons, opened in the early 1970s. Judiciously, they were not told what the units were for.

IT IS the management of the industrial work done in prisons that is most confused. Re-organised along 'modern' lines in the late 1960s, the official aim was to provide semi-skilled industrial work for prisoners which reflected employment opportunities on release. Recession and high unemployment have rendered this aim absurd: the APEX Trust, an organisation which helps ex-prisoners to find jobs, reckons that unemployment levels among their clients now average 80 per cent and in some parts of the country 90 per cent.

Ah, say the authorities, acquiring relevant training is not the point. The Director of Industries and Farms, Peter Canovan, who oversees prison industries says: 'What we're doing is getting a chap used to getting up, going to work, learning how to behave in a workshop. A lot of prisoners have never done that, never learnt how to get on with their workmates. It's not trade training. It's "work ethos" training'. But with four million unemployed, such a 'work ethos', even if realistically recreated, is not too appropriate either.

Nearly 70 per cent of prison industry products, like prison clothes, furniture and fittings, are 'bought' by the Prison Department itself. And about 12 per cent are bought by other government departments, like the infamous mailbags now made of polypropylene and manufactured mainly in Winchester prison. Other contracts for the government are more offensive; prisoners report making staves for the Special Patrol Group at Acklington prison, in Northumberland, and furniture for Saudi Arabian prisons in Coldingley, the only purely industrial prison in the service.

Which companies do trade with prisons? The Prison Department will not divulge their names. According to ex-prisoners, Harrods is among the big organisations that has used prison labour; in 1982 prisoners in the Verne prison were manufacturing Harrods plastic bags. And a 'Campaign against Prindus' launched by ex-prisoners in 1980 — to oppose the 'commercial exploitation of the prison population' — named a number of small companies involved, including: Britains Toys, Metal Box Company, Brian Mills Mail Order, Empire Products Ltd, Lloyds Cartons, Nelson Labels.

Outside companies use prisons to so some of their most monotonous work. Traditionally, women are given the 'light' employment, with heavy emphasis on domestic and 'feminine' tasks. Prisoners at Bullwood Hall, which mainly houses younger women, have two choices of workshop: sewing prison clothes, or assembling cardboard boxes. Courses offered are in catering, typing/office practice, and home economics although Governor Una McCullum is considering the introduction of an 'electronic wiring' course. Sex stereotyping is a consistent theme of women's imprisonment, a reflection of the 'help' they are deemed to need as inadequate females.

Although DIF officials are wary of talk about 'profit', prison industries are designed to offset some of the losses of forcible containment. When Prindus was launched in 1972, all glossy catalogues and high profile, Tory Minister of State Lord Colville estimated that within five years 26,000 prisoners would be employed in the industries, and that it would make a profit. Yet 1982 figures show only 15,000 prisoners at work, along with the large deficit.

Castigated by the 1977 May inquiry for their 'fatalistic and defeated' attitude, prison staff and governors are still not enthusiastic about creating the conditions necessary for workshop efficiency. One governor says: 'I find industries are a considerable bore. . . a nuisance. Running the routine of a prison, the rising, the feeding, the exercising, the bedding and the occasional slop out is enough in these days of continuous staff unrest without the unrealistic demands of the DIF'.

And prisoners don't much like their work either; they tell, with relish, tales of passive disruption. One prisoner told me how he earned his minimum allowance by hand stitching only one mailbag a week. Another recounted how he and other prisoners secreted abusive messages under the lids of typewriters that they were assembling: the typewriter lids were eventually removed from the assembly line. And women prisoners who worked in Holloway's jam factory (now closed) would not go into details about what they used to do to the jam there.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, does 'work' mean anything when it is not contrasted with 'free' time? In prison, work allocation is based on a system of privileges and punnishments to do with overall control of the prisoner. But whatever the work, in prison it is one set component in a schedule fixed rigidly by others. In their study of long-term prisoners in Durham E Wing, Laurie Taylor and Stan Cohen noted that factory workers 'outside' have desperately to invest jobs with meaning and 'time markers' — dividing up the day to create a sense of being in control, and to speed up the approach of free time. But in prisons, there can be no such time markers, nor any meaning in the work regardless of how 'good' and 'bad' it is. When work was introduced onto E Wing, the prisoners protested and built barricades — to them work was clearly punishment.

Earning money is the first 'validation' of a monotonous job. But prisoners doing anything from a 20 to a 37½ hour week are paid less than £3 a week. Current weekly earnings including overtime (and adjusted in line with inflation and rises in prison canteen prices) average £1.72 a week. Differentials are firmly embedded in the prison wage structure. Workers in wage Group I (for example, welders, fitters or printers) can earn up to £2.70 a week on the flat rate scheme. A bath hour worker or cleaner in Group 4 will earn only £2.35. All overtime is paid at 6 pence an hour. On incentive schemes, operated in Coldingley, for example, prisoners can earn up to £4.46 a week.

Because this is not 'free' work, there are no trade unions to negotiate wages or conditions. Or are there? Since the early 1970s the TUC has sat on a joint TUC/CBI Home Office 'consultative' committee on prison industries. The current TUC members are Clive Jenkins (ASTMS), Ada Maddocks (NALGO) and Dougie Grieve (Tobacco Workers Union) — appointed from a sub-committee of the General Council. This committee was set up less to protect the prisoners than to appease outside employers and workers who feared that Prindus products would undercut them. Prindus charges competitive rates when bidding for outside contracts says the DIF. But accusations of 'unfair competition' have come from small trade associations and trade unions.

As individuals, the committee members

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exhibit much goodwill towards the prisoners and some imagination. Clive Jenkins, with distinctive entrepreneurial flair, is backing the extension of a pilot scheme, first run in Wormwood Scrubs, for bookbinding to be done in prisons. As a trustee of the National Heritage Trust, he is concerned at the decay of antique books in Britain's libraries. What the trade unionists have not done is step back out of the Home Office dialogue to ask larger questions about crime and incarceration.

It is TUC policy that prison wages be raised to a more realistic level, but then it is also Home Office policy. Neither has pressed with any vigour for its implementation. DIF officials have marshalled the arguments against a pay rise with great vigour. Their main arguments concern differentials — how do you reward different levels of skill and effort? — and the difficulties about state benefits paid to prisoners' families if prisoners earn more. Thus are notions of the male 'breadwinner' pursued in the most inappropriate circumstances.

But if the kind of work prisoners do is a problem, so is the *lack* of work. The Council of Europe's Standard Minimum Rules, an idealistic benchmark, state that every prisoner should be 'constructively' occupied for a normal working day. But the reports of the Chief Inspector of Prisons, appointed in 1980 to review the workings of the entire prison system, especially in local prisons and remand centres, consistently point to the huge numbers of prisoners locked up for 23 hours a day. In Strangeways prison, visited in October 1981, he found half of the prison of 1500 men 'wholly unemployed'. □

VATICAN

Popish plots

Charles Raw on the holes in the murder conspiracy theory

THE FIRST THING to be said about David Yallop's book *In God's Name,* the account of the alleged poisoning of Pope John Paul I, is that the murder theory itself is not new. The second is that in spite of three years of research, undertaken apparently at the instigation of unnamed high-ups in the Vatican, he has come up with nothing substantial enough to warrant turning rumours into positive allegation, which is what he has done. The allegations are only possible because those he names are either dead or wanted for other crimes.

The suspects are:

- Cardinal Villot, Paul VI's Secretary of State at the Vatican who continued the job temporarily under Albino Luciani (John Paul I). Villot is dead.
- Cardinal Cody of Chicago, the controversial archbishop whose financial dealings — in particular on behalf of a lady friend — put him under a cloud and threat of dismissal by the reforming Luciani. (Dead.)
- Michele Sindona, the financier friend of Paul IV who had first drawn the Vatican into questionable financial dealings. (In jail for fraud in the USA and wanted by the Italians to face charges of organising the murder of the man appointed to liquidate his banks.)
- Roberto Calvi, the head of the Banco Ambrosiano who was introduced to the Vatican bank, the Institute for Religious Works (IOR), by Sindona. (Found hanging under Blackfriars Bridge in July 1982.)
- Archbishop Marcinkus, the American head of the IOR since 1971, but whom Italian magistrates would dearly like to get out of the Vatican to help them with their investigations into the Ambrosiano crash.
- Licio Gelli, the 'Venerable Grand Master' of the P2 masonic lodge, former mattress manufacturer from Arezzo, wanted on many charges in Italy and thought to be in hiding in South America.

(Yallop does not include the Jesuits in his conspiracy to murder, but they too have been the subject of rumours.)

Essentially the speculation that Luciani had been murdered arose because of the extraordinary behaviour of the Vatican officials, in particular Villot, after the new Pope's death on the night of 28/29 September 1978. The oddest act was to claim that Luciani's body had been found by one of his male secretaries at around 5.30am, when it had in fact been found some three quarters of an hour earlier by Luciani's faithful, long-serving nun-retainer, Sister Vincenza, after she found that Luciani had not drunk the coffee she left regularly outside his door at 4.30am.

The rumours were then further fuelled by the refusal to hold an autopsy, although this was a decision taken by a large number of cardinals, so a massive Vatican cover-up has to be alleged as well.

The official Vatican doctor who was called in — he had not attended Luciani before — said the death was from a heart attack and estimated the time about 11pm during the night. The papal embalmers seem to have been summoned with almost indecent haste. Yallop spoke to the embalmers and one new 'fact' to emerge is that they told him they thought the time of death was between 4 and 5am. But Yallop draws no conclusions from this, other than that it suggests further lies by Vatican officials. He is right to draw no conclusion, for if it points to anything it is to Sister Vincenza, i.e. the coffee was poisoned. Not even Yallop is prepared to draw the faithful sister into his conspiracy.

NOW back to the suspects. Rumour has always favoured Marcinkus for the job. It has long been known that Luciani, as patriarch of Venice, opposed the sale by the IOR of the rich, local bank — the Banca Cattolica del Veneto — to the Ambrosiano group in the early 1970s, in a deal arranged by Sindona. He flew down to Rome to speak to Marcinkus about it and was given short shrift. This, and Luciani's known objections to the continued involvement of the IOR in ungodly financial affairs, made it common speculation that Marcinkus would not hold on to his job under John Paul I.

However, there is no evidence of any substance, circumstantial or otherwise, that this led Marcinkus to kill Luciani. Except for one little story dug up by Yallop: Marcinkus, he says, was seen in the Vatican at the unusually early hour (he did not then live in the Vatican) of 6.30 on the morning of John Paul's death.

Yet Yallop does not make Marcinkus his prime suspect, even saying at one point he may have only been unwittingly involved in the conspiracy. (Marcinkus is, I suppose, the one of the six suspects who might fight back.) Marcinkus and the two cardinals are downgraded because they were 'men of the cloth', who take 'the long view' and are 'more likely to react in a manner less dramatic than murder'.

Instead, Yallop opts for Gelli as the main culprit 'at the heart of the conspiracy', acting it would seem essentially to protect his own and Calvi's interests, because of the effect the removal of Marcinkus as head of IOR would have had on Calvi's Banco Ambrosiano.

There is no question that had Luciani instituted a thorough investigation of IOR in the autumn of 1978, removing Marcinkus and the rest of its top management, this would have had serious consequences for the Banco Ambrosiano — and for IOR itself.

But to leap from that to the conclusion that Gelli, Calvi and their associates such as Ortolani, carried out a highly sophisticated murder conspiracy with the 'vital aid' of Villot, which an assembly of cardinals decided to cover up by refusing an autopsy, without the slightest bit of connecting evidence, is stretching it a bit.

It also oversimplifies the relationship between the villains, who were far from always in sufficient agreement to act in concert — and who were usually more frightened of each other than the Vatican. If Luciani had dismissed Marcinkus (and the other top IOR officials) his appointed successor would have faced an horrendous task. Furthermore, even under a reforming Pope, the Vatican would hardly do a 180 degree turn overnight and open its books to the Bank of Italy, let alone the world at large.

Yallop also overstates Gelli's power. 'At the time of Albino Luciani's death in September 1978 Licio Gelli to all practical purposes ran Italy'; he writes. Yallop is apparently not aware of the now more prevalent view that Gelli was not the real head of P2, but was a sort of middle-man fixer, a go-between for the true bosses with the rank and file membership. As Rino Formica, a close associate of Italian prime minister Craxi, said last week, 'The inventor of the P2 lodge cannot have been the mattress merchant of Arezzo'. Everyone took this to mean that the man he had in mind was Andreotti, ex-prime minister and current foreign minister (Mrs Calvi has been saying the same for two years).

The book also contains identifiable mistakes on financial affairs and has a curious epilogue, which is confused about the official report of the joint commission of inquiry set up by the Vatican and the Italian government into the IOR's involvement in the Ambrosiano affair.

Quite apart from its wilder, unsubstantiated statements, the book is also full bald assertions of other events which might have some foundation in fact but are far from proved (for example, that Ambrosiano money went via IOR to Solidarity, that its funds also helped Argentina buy Exocets). Vehement and repeated assertion is no substitute for hard evidence. □

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DIARY

Francis Wheen

Like him or not, you have to admit that Ronald Reagan is a terrific performer. Ron O'Reagan in Ballyporeen, General Reagan on the Normandy beaches, President Reagan at the London summit — and now, rather more implausibly, Mr Ronald Reagan the Home Counties businessman, hailing from 'Epsom, County Surrey'. It can be only a matter of time before some diligent researcher from Debrett's finds that Reagan's great-uncle owned a grocer's shop in Grantham. On the Left it is customary to dismiss Reagan as nothing but a ham actor, but I think this misses the most important point about him. He *means* it. When his eyes fill with tears at the end of his more emotional speeches, he doesn't need an aide to hold an onion in front of his face. He is a politician who believes his own rhetoric.

○

That, of course, is why he's so good on television. I have just come across an interesting little passage in Theodore White's book *America in Search of Itself*, in which he describes the Republican primary in California 20 years ago:

> And on the television screen entered a new personality. The personality of that evening in late May was a Hollywood actor named Ronald Reagan. There he was: amusing, yet serious. There he was, in his first flight, pleading that California voters choose Goldwater, the man of American principles, over Rockefeller, the big spender. His was a splendid performance. He was, apparently, doing a fund-raiser.

And it worked. A few days later, when White visited the Goldwater headquarters, he saw a row of women opening envelopes. 'Out of them came one-dollar bills, five-dollar bills, even an occasional Social Security cheque endorsed to Goldwater or Reagan.' The Hollywood actor had, White notes, tapped a hidden mother-lode of money — poor people's money. The rest is history.

○

I found the Reagan reference in the course of my research for a book which I am writing on the history of television. The following day I stumbled upon another gem — an early attempt to project a British politician as a television personality. In January 1955, the head of publicity at Conservative Central Office, Mark Chapman-Walker, suggested to Leonard Miall, the man in charge of Television Talks at the BBC, that a certain promising young woman ought to be invited to appear on the panel show *In The News*. He described her as 'a very bright girl' who was 'young, under 30, very good-looking, a first at Oxford'. This was a full four years before the very bright girl in question entered Parliament as the Honourable Member for Finchley. Oh, and she wasn't *that* bright: she actually had a second-class degree.

○

Even after 30 years of the best training that money can buy, however, Margaret Thatcher is still quite capable of making a fool of herself when she goes on the air. Interviewed on the Radio 4 programme *The World This Weekend* last Sunday, she argued that Britain needed to have a more mobile workforce, and that we could learn a lesson from other countries. 'In Japan and America,' the Sage of Finchley remarked, 'they have a more flexible labour market — it's a terrible phrase but it does seem that more people are willing to move and change jobs.' This will certainly come as a surprise to employees in Japan, whose most famous characteristic is that they stay in the same company all their working life.

○

A strange battle is being fought on the shelves of my local newsagent between *Majesty* ('The Monthly Royal Review') and its younger rival, *The Royal Magazine*. In its latest issue *The Royal Magazine* prints an 'interview' with Princess Diana's yet-to-be-born second baby. Not to be outdone, *Majesty* has cobbled together '30 things you *really* didn't know about the Royal Family'. Princess Michael of Kent is the only member of the royal family to own cats; the Duchess of Gloucester does not have net curtains at her window; while she was engaged to Prince Charles, Princess Diana's staple diet was apples and yoghurt; throughout her first pregnancy she ate nothing but fried tomatoes and bacon. Apparently there is a large number of fetishists who *really* want to know these 'facts'; I suppose I shall have to join them, since Anthony Barnett and Ken Livingstone both assure us that the Queen is a secret ally of the Left. But I have my doubts. The only member of the royal family who was even remotely left-wing was Lord Mountbatten, who used to give Prince Philip a subscription to the *New Statesman* for Christmas, and who wrote the occasional article for us under a pseudonym. Her Majesty will have to do more than open the Thames Barrier and snub President Reagan before she convinces me that she is of the same mould.

○

Last Sunday the *NS* cricket team won a handsome victory over *Tribune*; this Saturday we take on the Fabian Society, as part of their centenary celebrations. Ian Martin, the Fabians' general secretary, draws my attention to a letter published in *The Times* on 29 August 1899 which deplored the 'Fabian tactics' adopted by the cricketer who 'is paid to keep up his end and has his average, his captain and his committee to consider'. If the Fabians really believe in gradualism, perhaps they could adopt Geoff Boycott as their mascot.

ROGER WODDIS

I've Been to a Marvellous Demo

(Acknowledgements to Noël Coward)

'I do not think they are speaking for the majority.' — President Reagan on the CND demonstration in London which numbered 200,000 people.

People expressing,
Or so they're professing,
The popular will
By means that are graphic
And hold up the traffic
Have made me quite ill.
Some of us met the other day
To contradict what the peaceniks say,
And show we're much bigger
Than newspapers figure,
And far less naïve
Than people believe.

I've been to a marvellous demo
With Maggie and Geoffrey and Ron;
It started quite small
With a few in Whitehall,
But it grew as the morning wore on.
Dear Tarzan turned up in a loincloth
And uttered a terrible roar;
Keith Joseph arrived wearing straws in his hair,
And then we all joined the vast crowd in the Square,
There must have been — oh, at least ten of us there,
I couldn't have loved it more!

I've been to a marvellous demo,
Leon Brittan arrived on a horse,
Lady Olga wore flame
And we blushed at her name,
Though she's dead against Russia, of course.
The terrible twins, Steel and Owen,
Were frankly a terrible bore,
Paul Johnson turned purple denouncing Red Ken
And did something frightfully rude with his pen,
Then wrote 'Who's for cruise?' on the face of Big Ben,
I couldn't have loved it more!

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Sisters move to the left

In this Presidential election year, Barbara Ehrenreich reviews the development of American feminism and predicts that the movement will now have to grow beyond its existing leadership

A RECENT gathering of 500 women in the ballroom of a fading, roadside motel in New Hampshire illustrated to me the strength and weakness of American feminism. The women were young and old (many, in fact, in mother-daughter pairs); some dressed smartly in the professional woman's standard suit-and-silk blouse, others in their cocktail party best, and a sprinkling in country-feminist blue jeans and sweaters.

The occasion was the state-wide Susan B. Anthony Award Dinner, hosted by the YWCA, which there as in many other regions has become something of a feminist front. Included in the evening's events were rousing anti-Reagan speeches, moving personal testimonials, standing ovations, songs, and much embracing and warm appreciation all around. This was down-home American feminism at its best — a movement which has succeeded in developing a broad oppositional culture.

Afterwards, a few of us decided to look in at the Mondale rally which had been tacked on, opportunistically, to the main event. The draw here was three nationally known feminists: a vice president of the National Organisation for Women (the nation's largest feminist organisation, which had endorsed Mondale with premature zeal in November); the president of the New York City Council; and Betty Friedan, whose 1963 book *The Feminist Mystique* played a major role in the revival of American feminism. They spoke briefly — hammering away on the theme of Mondale's 'electability' — but did not fully succeed in distracting all of the approximately 75 assembled women from the cash bar on one side of the room. This was mainstream American feminist leadership at its worst, lacklustre party loyalists who seem more determined than ever to play by the rules that men have made.

So here is the paradox: organised mainstream feminism, represented by NOW and a handful of national spokeswomen, has never seemed so low on vision and initiative. NOW, for example, keeps drifting toward the suffragettes' mistake of becoming a single-issue movement — this time, around the Equal Rights Amendment — and seems now to be floundering in the wake of the ERA's most recent defeat. The best that is said of NOW's current president is that she is a good administrator; no one could argue that she is charismatic or original. And some of the founding mothers of the movement, like Friedan, seem simply tired out.

At the same time, though, the political power of women has never been greater. For the first time since American women achieved suffrage in 1920 women are a recognised political force — feared by Republicans and courted assiduously by Democrats.

The source of women's new collective political influence is what pollsters call the 'gender gap'. In 1980, and again in the congressional elections of 1982, women's vote diverged from men's by about 10 percentage points in favour of the Democrats. Opinion polls also showed a marked difference in political attitudes. Women are more pacifist than men, more concerned with the environment, and more supportive of government social welfare programmes. These are now described as the 'gender gap' issues'. Disconcertingly, neither the Equal Rights Amendment nor abortion are gender gap issues.

This development is not only historically unique for America: it is unique in an international sense. In the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe, there has traditionally been what we would label a 'reverse gender gap' — women have voted more conservatively than men, especially where there is a Christian Democratic Party to vote for. In Europe the trend in recent years has been for women to move leftward, so that the 'reverse gender gap' is closing. But nowhere except in the United States, as far as I can discover, have women actually moved to the left of men.

Explanations for the gender gap usually contain the following ingredients, in varying proportions. 'Feminine values', such as nurturance and compassion, are believed to predispose women to a peaceable political stance in favour of the welfare state. Other factors include the rapid influx of women into the workforce, especially in the 1970s; the rise in the number of women who are single heads of households; Ronald Reagan; and feminism itself.

Obviously, feminine values do not explain much by themselves, since they should have been just as strong in 1960 as in 1980 and should be as compelling in Italy as in the United States. So the usual line of reasoning is that feminine values have somehow been activated as women have gained a measure of independence from men. The transition from the supermarket to the labour market has, unquestionably, been an eye-opener. As elsewhere, most women in the United States are concentrated in traditional female jobs, which do not pay enough to support a family or even a fairly frugal individual.

Meanwhile, over nine million American women are the sole support of their families (up by 100 per cent since 1970), and under conditions which have been made all the more precarious by Reaganomics. The American welfare state, which was always shamefully inadequate by European standards, has been savaged by cutbacks; the capital offensive against labour in the workplace is in full swing — and these are surely radicalising conditions for anyone who must go home at night to feed her children. In support of this line of reasoning, the most progressive women, statistically speaking, fall into the categories of unmarried, employed and/or Black or Hispanic.

How much feminism itself has had to do with the creation of the gender gap is hard to say. Naturally, we all — myself included — take credit for it in public, and the threat of the gender gap has been used by feminists to bludgeon Congress into voting for legislation to enforce child support and a modicum of public sector job creation for women. Similarly, it is the gender gap, rather than any innate anti-sexism that impelled the Democratic presidential candidates to state their willingness to consider female running mates for vice-president and to promise undying support for the ERA.

My own tentative interpretation is that the gender gap has more to do with women bearing the brunt of economic hardship than with explicitly feminist thinking. It is poor women and, most strikingly, poor, single, working women, who account for much of the aggregate gap, and feminism — despite all our efforts — is still largely a middle-class movement and ideology.

But if feminism cannot take credit for the aggregate gap, it can probably take credit for the 'elite gap' — the difference between college-educated, and presumably middle-class, men

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and women. In the 1980 election there was a 17 point difference between the way these men and women voted. Reagan was favoured by 58 per cent of the men, but only 41 per cent of the women.

IN THE ABSENCE of an American labour party, or significant socialist voice, the women's movement has been a major carrier, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, of social democratic values. (Others are the Black movement, which was in disarray until Jesse Jackson's campaign, and trade unions, which, unfortunately, tend to combine a progressive domestic stance with a pro-imperialist approach to foreign policy.)

At one of the most important feminist events of the 1970s — the federally-sponsored First National Women's Conference in Houston in 1977 — women voted for a programme of reforms which, with the deletion of references to gender, could have been taken for the platform of European socialist parties. The programme was entirely ignored by President Carter, but the 'spirit of Houston' is, if anything, stronger than ever. American feminism may be 'bourgeois', 'individualistic' and all the other things its left-wing detractors have said about it, but it is also a powerful force on the Left of the political spectrum — and all the more so since the arrival of Reagan and his 'new right' anti-feminist shock troops.

If I am right about the role of feminism in creating the 'elite gap', one could say that feminism has acted to alienate relatively privileged women from their own class interests — that is, from the pro-business, pro-Cold War interests of the men of their class. This is not a uniform effect; many young women have been inspired by feminism to elbow their way into Wall Street law firms and high-paying medical specialities, and it is not clear whether feminist, or even 'feminine', values can survive in these settings.

But the new tendency of women to identify themselves as Democrats is striking, as is the growing disaffection of many high-placed Republican women. For example, Kathy Wilson, who is in the increasingly contradictory position of being a Republican feminist, has called the President a 'danger', and former Reagan functionary Barbara Honegger has been campaigning as a feminist for Jesse Jackson. These are laudable cases of class treason, inspired not only by the belligerent masculinism of the President, but by the strength of feminism as an inter-class ideology which potentially links even the upper-class woman with the most oppressed of her sisters.

If the 'elite gap' is a measure of the present constituency for feminism, then the aggregate gap is a measure of the *possible* constituency for feminism. Women are voting differently from men in no small part because they are now less likely to be tied to men by financial dependency. They do not experience the 'privilege', so often invoked by right-wing anti-feminist leader Phyllis Schlafly, of being full-time housewives. And they face male authority and blatant sexism in its public forms — at work and in the crumbling institutions of the welfare state.

But who is going to help this consciousness find a more forceful expression than that offered by the centrist leadership of the Democratic Party? Probably not the current mainstream national leadership of the women's movement — not only because its approach to politics has become increasingly 'professional' and detached from grassroots mobilisation, but because the two issues on which it has focused — the ERA and a woman vice president — are, for many women, somewhat remote and symbolic.

Nor is there much hope right now from America's tiny mixed (male and female) Left, which is based largely in universities, trade unions and single-issue organisations. The American Left is far more pro-feminist than most of its European counterparts, but it still has an unfortunate tendency to see male unemployment as the crucial economic problem and to slight women's workplace and welfare needs.

The best hope, it seems to me, is for the re-emergence of 'socialist-feminism', not as an organisationally separate tendency, but as a political spirit — infusing (and bringing together) the women's movement and the various pieces of the Left. □

Barbara Ehrenreich is a fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, DC.

THIRD WORLD

Drug deal

Anton La Guardia on an unhealthy free market

IN BRITAIN, where controls on pharmaceuticals are relatively tight, one in ten people taking prescription drugs is reported to suffer from side effects. In the Third World, where controls can be non-existent, the damage is much higher.

The United Nations estimates that in some developing countries, up to three quarters of drugs, including potentially toxic medicines, are bought without prescriptions over the counter, or from street vendors. Drug companies in the Third World are selling drugs which are banned or restricted in developed countries, including the promotion in many countries of dangerous sex hormones for malnourished children. Other companies promote medicines for dubious therapeutic uses, such as E. Merck's marketing in Latin America of a harmless vitamin B-6 derivative, Encefabol, with the misleading claim that it will 'improve children's brain performance, concentration and sociability'.

Now, the world community has finally grasped the nettle. Last month, the World Health Organisation's governing body, the World Health Assembly, called for a meeting in 1985 to discuss the drug industry's marketing practices. It did so despite fierce opposition and veiled threats from the United States. Consumer groups hope that the move will lead to the introduction of an international drug marketing code similar to the controversial code on the marketing of baby milk, adopted by the organisation in 1981.

The drug industry is clearly worried. Its representative body at WHO, the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Associations (IFPMA) immediately condemned the proposed meeting as the first step towards regulating all aspects of drug companies' activities, including research. In 1981, the United States was the only country to vote against introducing the baby milk code. This year, it has again been isolated in defence of the position that unfettered free enterprise is more important than the health of millions. The United States alone voted against the resolution by Nordic and developing countries calling for next year's meeting. A hundred nations, including Britain, voted for the move. West Germany and Japan abstained.

The assembly also called on WHO to bolster its output of 'unbiased' information on individual drugs. For the first time, consumer and patient groups will take part in the 1985 WHO meeting with government and industry representatives.

WHO had a mandate to develop a marketing code as far back as 1978, but the issue was dropped in the aftermath of the baby milk row and in the face of opposition from the United States, some developed countries and the pharmaceutical lobby. The United States, which provides a quarter of WHO's funds, has privately threatened to leave the body should a drug marketing code ever be adopted. Following cuts in US contributions to the World Bank and the US's threatened withdrawal from UNESCO next year, WHO's secretariat wanted to steer away from a drug code.

In London in April a senior WHO official, Dr Ernest Lauridsen, told MPs that the organisation preferred to concentrate on convincing countries to adopt its 'essential drugs programme' rather than become entangled in a row over a marketing code. The essential drugs programme, established in 1981, aims to make the 200-odd drugs essential to curing 80 per cent of the world's diseases available to all at low prices. Almost all these drugs are no longer covered by patents and can be brought cheaply under their generic (non-brand) names. WHO is pressing countries to re-allocate resources towards priority drugs, buy these generic drugs by competitive tenders, improve distribution and the training of health workers and encourage local firms to produce essential drugs.

At a time of mounting foreign debts, Third World countries spend up to 30 per cent of their meagre health budgets on a plethora of over-priced and unnecessary drugs, mainly imported from developed countries. The Third World spends up to £15 billion on drugs every year and many countries import up to 80 per cent of their medicines.

In North Yemen, for example, where virtually all drugs are imported, 17.8 per cent of the total in 1980 was for wasteful vitamins and tonics, while only 1.3 per cent went on drugs to cure the country's most common diseases — malaria, bilharzia and tuberculosis. WHO says that by adopting its recommendations, as a number of countries have done successfully, drug bills could be halved.

The battle is by no means over. The agenda for next year's meeting will be drawn up by what the consumer groups say is an American dominated adhoc committee. In the case of the

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baby milk code, multinational companies have successfully exploited the loopholes. 'The (baby milk) code is so loose that an unscrupulous manufacturer could drive a herd of milk cows through it,' complained a Western Samoan delegate in 1981, as the final draft was being drawn up.

More importantly, an international marketing code is not itself the answer to the world's health problems. Third World countries must adopt comprehensive essential drugs policies and tough national regulations if they are to provide basic health care for their people. 'History will judge us harshly,' said Dr Lauridsen, 'if we have wonderful drugs and vaccines, but fail to make them available to the many hundreds of millions who so desperately need them.' □

LATIN AMERICA

Banks' bluff called

Sue Branford on why children die so that interest rates can be met

THE TIMING could not have been more ironic. No sooner was the smugly complacent economic summit over in London than it was announced that Argentina was heading for a violent collision with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The issue at stake in this confrontation is the extent to which the heavily indebted developing countries should be forced to accept a cut in their already low living standards in order to bail out western banks.

The Latin American countries did what they could to bring this question to the top of the agenda in London. The presidents of the seven biggest debtors — Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico and Venezuela — sent the leaders a strongly-worded letter (which received surprisingly little coverage in the press here). It said: 'Latin America has experienced a severe reduction in its economic activity and is going through an acute financial crisis . . . An intolerable situation has been reached.' Yet the world leaders did little more than repeat the familiar clichés on the need to reduce world interest rates, to stimulate world trade and to increase the flow of investment into the Third World.

Although protests from the indebted nations — particularly in Latin America — have been growing rapidly in recent weeks, the industrialised countries have still failed to take the required measures. The only important response so far has come from the IMF. It is urging the commercial banks to renegotiate the debts of the two leading debtor countries — Mexico and Brazil — over a period of years, to avoid the repetition each year of cliff-hanging talks, as the debts falling due in the following year are rescheduled. It is also calling on the banks to bring down the interest rate 'spreads' on loans to developing countries.

But in practice these changes add up to little. The first is merely procedural, providing the debtor countries with no additional relief, as the banks well know that they can expect no repayments of principal (the original debt, rather than the interest) from these countries in the foreseeable future. The second at best will reduce the interest burden on Mexico and Brazil by one percentage point, an improvement which could be wiped out, even before it is effected, by a further increase in US interest rates (American prime rates today, at 12.5 per cent, are about twice as high as they were when many current Latin American loans were contracted). Real relief would only be felt if current interest rates were brought down by five or six points.

The world leaders are playing with fire. The weight of the debt burden is now so heavy in many Latin American countries that it is threatening the survival of the administrations in power. In these circumstances, government leaders put their own survival at home before their commitment to the world banking system and may default to appease critics at home. The situation today is more dangerous than in August 1982, when Mexico's default brought the world debt crisis into the headlines.

The present burden imposed on the debtor nations is extraordinarily high, far greater than was thought possible a few years ago. In June 1979 Lord Lever, the former Labour cabinet member, warned: 'They [the indebted nations] can only pay interest on the debt, to say nothing of repaying it in real terms, by delivering to the world more goods and services than they themselves are taking; that day is very far distant. For an indefinite period they will be able to pay existing debts punctually only by punctually borrowing new money. That process will not be smooth.'

The terrifying social cost of this process is not properly appreciated. Latin America's gross domestic product *fell* by about 4 per cent last year. In a Unicef report published last November it was estimated that a 2-3 per cent decline in GDP led to a 10-15 per cent drop in income for the poorest sectors of the society. As so many Latin Americans are already living on, or below, the breadline, this inevitably means a sharp increase in the number of deaths from starvation.

THE CRUEL ABSURDITY of a situation where the poor bail out the rich is well illustrated in Brazil, the most heavily indebted of the Latin American nations, with a long and medium-term debt of $19.2 billion at the end of 1983. Although it is widely accepted that 15 per cent of export earnings is the most that can be reasonably spent on 'servicing' debts each year, Brazil spent 53.4 per cent in 1982 and 48.1 per cent in 1983. This was the highest proportion in Latin America, with only Chile spending a comparable amount.

Moreover, Brazil undertook a strenuous export drive during these years, so that its export earnings rose from $15.2 billion in 1979 to $21.9 billion in 1983. At the same time, its imports were cut from $18.1 billion in 1979 to $15.4 billion in 1983. To achieve this impressive trade surplus — pocketed by foreign creditors — the government put the country on to what amounted to a war footing.

Land previously used to cultivate foodstuffs for local consumption was turned over to export crops, particularly soya beans to be fed to Europe's beef cattle. Despite the continued population increase, domestic production of both kidney beans and maize, two staple foodstuffs, fell sharply from 1981 to 1983. This decline was not offset by a compensatory increase in the production of other foodstuffs.

This means, paradoxically, that although last year Brazil earned $7.4 billion from its exports of coffee, soya, cocoa, sugar, orange juice and meat, many of the poor in its cities are starving. At the beginning of this year, Oxfam carried out a survey into the nutritional level of the population in the shanty-towns in Ceará, a poor state in the north-east of Brazil where the impact of the recession has come together with the effects of a prolonged drought. It found that over half the children under five were suffering from serious malnutrition. Girls were worse affected than boys, with the percentage varying from 57 to 73 percent. From 32 percent to 45 per cent of the children born alive were dying under the age of five.

Disgust at a world financial order which forces Third World countries to send abroad massive amounts of food when its own people are dying from hunger fuelled the mass campaign for direct presidential elections which swept Brazil during the first few months of this year. At all the demonstrations speakers fiercely attacked the government for giving in to pressure from the international bankers and for worsening the present recession.

Even conservatives are outraged. Sérgio Corrêa da Costa, Brazil's ambassador to Washington, said recently; 'In practice, it is as if the developed economies were imposing a heavy tribute on many of the developing countries — a kind of re-emergence of the tithe system we knew so well in the days when Brazil was a Portuguese colony'.

Internal political considerations have led Bolivia, Ecuador and the Dominican Republic to suspend interest payments to the commercial banks. Unless the IMF takes the unprecedented step of overruling its own officials and accepting a less severe austerity programme, Argentina may be the next. With a foreign debt of $43.6 billion, Argentina is the third biggest debtor in Latin America. If it were to declare a moratorium, the commercial banks would be severely jolted.

The ensuing crisis might lead the US government to put into practice one of its dramatic contingency plans, such as the US Federal Reserve and Treasury taking over American commercial banks' Argentine loans, or the 'capping' of interest payments. The indebted countries of Latin America are learning the game of call your bluff to galvanise the industrialised nations into action. □

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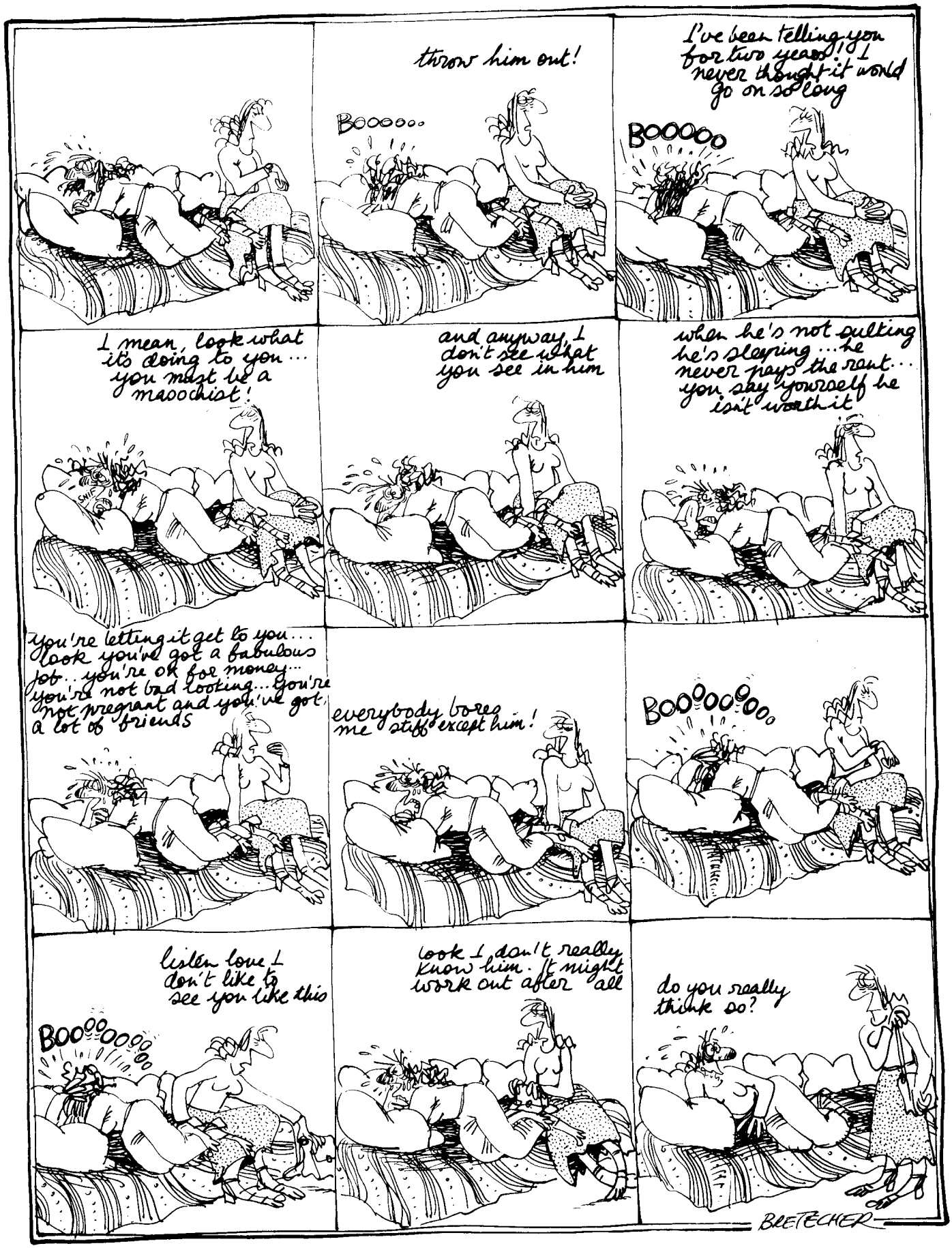
BRETECHER

HOPE AGAINST HOPE


throw him out!
Booooo
I've been telling you for two years! I never thought it would go on so long
BOOOOO
I mean, look what it's doing to you... you must be a masochist!
and anyway, I don't see what you see in him
when he's not sulking he's sleeping... he never pays the rent... you say yourself he isn't worth it
you're letting it get to you... look you've got a fabulous job... you're ok for money... you're not bad looking... you're not pregnant and you've got a lot of friends
everybody bores me stiff except him!
BOOOOOOOO
listen love I don't like to see you like this
BOOOOOOOO
look I don't really know him. It might work out after all
do you really think so?
BRETECHER

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LETTERS

Positively angry

East London Socialist Teachers Alliance, London SE12

We read the article 'Teachers strike back' (*NS* 1 June) with interest but disagree with statements made, in particular about 'women in the NUT who most strongly share the nurses' ethos of non-striking, as well as their tolerance of low pay'.

We feel that this is an age-old theory of women within trade unions which says that we are not interested in becoming involved, that we do not want to hold positions of 'power' within the union, and that we are not developed in our opposition to low pay. As members of the Socialist Teachers Alliance (not Association as stated in the article) we have been campaigning for positive action for women teachers for some time.

East London NUT groups in six schools took strike action last week in support of our pay claim. The response from women in secondary, junior and infant schools was overwhelming. We were also well represented on the Miners demonstration on 7 June with delegations from other London schools. It is now the policy of the Inner London Teachers Association to campaign for strike action on 27 June as the Kent NUM is calling on all trade unions to take solidarity action. We are *no longer* sitting back and tolerating anything.

Historically the NAS was formed out of opposition to equality for women, therefore the NUT was attractive to women members who now constitute 66 per cent of its membership. Women within the NUT are pushing for policies to promote the interests of women. There is a great deal of self-organisation — women's sub-committees at a national and local level, equal opportunities committees, women officers, women's courses, national advisory committees and some local associations are presently negotiating better child care facilities and creches. It is the policy of the Socialist Teachers Alliance to argue that the Executive's National Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities should consist of women members and should be elected by women only.

Women have put pressure on the Union to adopt a position on 'Promotion and Women Teachers' which recognises the ghetto of women's low pay, and the fact that so many are on Scales 1 & 2. They will also need to look one step further and pinpoint that the problem lies within male-dominated appointment panels, inadequate child care facilities and sexist hierarchial structures in schools. We need now to push the predominantly male national Executive into examining their own practice and adopting a commitment to positive action for women teachers.

Labour sank with the Belgrano

Nicholas Hyman, London SW3

Peter Kellner is enlightening on 'why Labour lost' the 1983 general election (*NS* 8 June). Yet surely the key reason still dents the Kinnock team's credibility as the alternative government.

I refer to Michael Foot's rapture at the anachronistic Falklands war, *Belgrano* sinking and all. Foot made the affair feasible constitutionally, through an apparent consensus to use force rather than diplomacy. At the same time, Labour threw away the name of peace-seeker, and guaranteed the parliamentary majority whose prejudices now corrode Britain.

Until the wisdom of such as Tam Dalyell, Judith Hart and Tony Benn — who opposed the 'war of Thatcher's face' — is acknowledged in Labour policymaking, the lesson of the voters' desertion is unlearnt. To be elected, Labour has to learn from Sweden (as well as Arthur Scargill) to stand for the United Nations and real peace, towards prosperous neutralism.

The Falklands war was a monument to Labour's lack of realism, as well as to the myopic opportunism of Thatcher's 'war cabinet'. Gaitskell opposed Suez in 1956, and was later, perhaps unjustly, defeated in the next general election. Foot was invoking 'the spirit of the Falklands' to Labour's aid even in the election campaign: was the defeat of such fatuity unmerited?

Foot in it?

J. E. Mortimer, General Secretary, The Labour Party

In his review of Michael Foot's new book on the 1983 general election, Peter Kellner said that Michael Foot made no reference to my declaration of loyalty to his leadership during the campaign. Peter Kellner is wrong. Michael Foot describes the declaration on page 82 of his book.

At one stage during the campaign a number of newspapers were 'reporting' that Michael Foot was being pushed aside. The story was a fabrication but I was being questioned about it. If I had said nothing I might have added to the speculation. I chose to give a factual answer. I am sorry that Peter Kellner, whom I respect as a journalist, feels that this was a gaffe which helped to lose the election.

All that jazz

Charles Fox, c/o New Statesman

Half a touché, Chris Wagstaff (Letters 8 June), with Duke Ellington getting a rap over the knuckles too: his original title for Mood Indigo was Dreamy Blues. It belongs within a genre cultivated by Ellington which I'd be happy to label blues impressionism, for ensemble textures and solo inflections suggest exactly that. Incidentally, the fact that Mood Indigo is scored for only trumpet, clarinet and trombone, plus rhythm section, surely emphasises the uniqueness of Ellington's voicings. You don't achieve that subtlety by just handing the tune over to a New Orleans front-line.

Games people play

Peter Green, Southampton

It is difficult for me to express how relieved I felt when Alison Hennegan wrote about something other than lesbian feminism (*NS* 25 May). It is not that I don't sympathise with such a preoccupation, it's just that one waits for articulate members of socially disenfranchised communities to demonstrate that they can achieve genuine emotional independence from their 'labels'. The fact that she was able to commend an ethic that many knee-jerk radicals would condemn out of hand is equally indicative of an independent mind — one could almost describe such an article as worthy of Orwell's pen!

It may be that she has had to over-generalise, thus displaying what is almost certainly a rather fanciful view of the inheritance of Tom Brown. For example, she doesn't mention the crude and widespread suspiciousness of the public school 'blood' for anything remotely intellectual. But more important, it is significant that someone like Alison Hennegan can see some legitimate value in the more established forms of competitive sport. I, for one, would hate to live in a socialist society where sporting opportunities were dominated by a taste for those drab and often pathetic Steinerian 'games'.

No easy images

Neil McIntosh, Shelter, London SE1

Christian Wolmar's review of *Down and Out: Orwell's Paris and London Revisited* (*NS* 1 June) begins with a paragraph that must be utterly confusing to anyone other than the housing *cognoscenti*, of which, of course, Christian is one.

In that paragraph he asserts that Shelter was 'roundly criticised' (by whom?) for perpetuating negative images of the homeless by using a poster showing an 'ordinary family'. In the next sentence he criticises the authors of this new book for doing precisely the opposite, that is, showing the seamy side of homelessness.

This confusion would not be worth commenting on if it were not indicative of a major problem for many campaigns, which is that all too often, individuals, organisations and journals seem to have lost the ability to speak intelligibly to ordinary people. Christian Wolmar offers us no real indications of how we might use photography to assist the campaign for the homeless; a failing he shares with the handful of other critics of Shelter's campaign.

There has been a tendency to try to deny that the stereotyped homeless person (alcoholics, drug addicts) exists at all, and this simply confuses non experts, who can see with their own eyes. Far better to confront those stereotypes and expose their inadequacies than pretend they are entirely fallacious.

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Christopher Priest

Fathoming Wells

IN 1949 THE publishers Eyre & Spottiswoode announced the publication of a first novel by a young British author: *On a Dark Night* by Anthony West. In the way that publishers do they added a few lines of information about the author, including, in this case, that he had started work on a biography of his father, H.G. Wells. According to Anthony West, the immediate result of this public revelation of parentage was that his mother, Dame Rebecca West, launched a campaign of vilification against him, starting with (but by no means confined to) making sure that he would be disinherited by his stepfather, a prosperous businessman named Henry Andrews. H.G. Wells and West had earlier agreed amicably that, as he now had substantial prospects, there would be no provision for him from that side of his unusual family. Understandably, perhaps, Anthony West has strong feelings about all this, and makes no bones about it: his mother wanted no more said about her affair with Wells, and was already trying to rewrite history. Dame Rebecca died last year and now, 35 years after it was first mentioned, West has completed his biography.

H.G. Wells has been written about many times (not least by himself, with a new volume of sexual memoirs — also made publishable at long last by Dame Rebecca's demise — due to appear in September) and of all major literary figures he was one of the most public. Quite apart from this, and the fact that his novels were persistently and revealingly autobiographical, the impact Wells made on his time ensures that no social history of the period can exclude him.

Yet today his reputation is paradoxical, in that his name is still a household one, but the major part of his immense and interesting output lies neglected and unregarded, passed over every day in secondhand bookshops throughout the land. Wells is clearly long overdue for major reappraisal, and perhaps it will begin with West's biography.

The author's bitterness about his mother does not extend to Wells himself but the tone of the book throughout is one of re-examination. Like a criminologist sifting through the facts of a famous unsolved case, West attempts to unravel the various minor mysteries or contradictions that have arisen in previous accounts of Wells's life. Sometimes these divergences are dull and time-consuming, in particular the background about Wells's parents (one of the pleasant oddities of this book is that the birth of the protagonist does not take place until nearly halfway through, and follows the description of his death), and sometimes they are, to say the least, arguable, as when Anthony West attempts to 'correct' minor

H.G. Wells: Aspects of a Life
ANTHONY WEST *Hutchinson* £12.95
Heritage
ANTHONY WEST *Secker* £8.95

incidents which he claims have been distorted and rewritten over the years by Dame Rebecca.

But occasionally these sidetracks are intriguing and illuminating, such as the long passage about George Gissing's deceptions against both Wells and many other of his friends, the re-interpretation of the early pages of Wells's *Experiment in Autobiography,* and the story of his relationship with Dorothy Richardson. Perhaps these are minutiae, but they are exactly why literary history can be so interesting.

West makes no especial effort to reconsider Wells as a writer, although he speaks highly of him, but his book will be irreplaceable for future investigators.

H.G. Wells was a great man, although perhaps not, when all is said and done, one of the greatest of writers. His best novels are marvellous, visionary in the broadest sense of the word, but most of them come from his early days and they include most of his scientific romances. After about 1910 his work is more firmly time-locked, with the exception of a few of his later novels and *The Outline of History.* The speculative non-fiction, best in books like *Anticipations,* and on which much of his status as a thinker was based, gradually phased into journalism. Wells quarrelled too often, went on too long about his obsessions and on occasion his timing was terrible: he published *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind,* a bullish view of prosperity, in the middle of the Depression.

His long life, though, was a good and generous one, selfish only in sexual matters. His peccadillos were well known in his wide-ranging circle during his lifetime, and since his death they have been increasingly well publicised; the affair with Rebecca West, which lasted for more than a decade, was but one of many. Our curiosity about such things, and the tendency to condemn him for them in modern terms — he advocated sexual freedom for women, and meant it sincerely, but with hindsight it looks perilously close to a defence of his own promiscuity — can tend to distract from his real importance. Wells not only advised world statesmen like Roosevelt and Stalin; he moved the minds, and sometimes the hearts of millions. He stood for peace, intelligence and harmony between nations, and unlike many writers who profess the same liberal ideals he made it his life's mission to campaign for them.

This is a fascinating and unusual biography, as interesting for the author's relationship with the subject as for the subject himself. The book closes with a vignette of H.G. Wells posing for a photograph on the Norfolk coast; Wells-next-the-Sea at Wells-next-the-Sea. It's a glimpse of the cheerful, jocular private man, known best to his friends.

Anthony West's third novel, *Heritage* (published in the USA in 1955), also sees print at last in this country. What most people will read is the introduction, with its further information about the attacks Dame Rebecca is said to have made on her son. I hope that the novel itself does not therefore become a sort of footnote to the family feud. Aside from its interest as a *roman à clef* — there are anecdotal similarities between this and the biography — it's a well written and acutely observed novel. There were no more novels from West after this one; if by her campaign Dame Rebecca discouraged her son from writing more then she was wrong to do so. Like much of his father's work, it has been unavailable too long. □

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BIOGRAPHY
Nigel Cross

Unique

Secrets of a Woman's Heart
HILARY SPURLING *Hodder* £14.95

Centenaries often serve as an excuse for the publication of hasty biographies of minor writers. The novelist Ivy Compton-Burnett, who died in 1969, was born 100 years ago this month. Hilary Spurling's *Secrets of a Woman's Heart* completes a two-volume life of Ivy Compton-Burnett that ranks as one of the more important literary biographies of the century. It is not only an engrossing account of a curiously static life, it is a critical reassessment that enhances an already formidable, if narrow, literary reputation.

Ivy Compton-Burnett has been compared to Jane Austen and Congreve. She is part of no school, neither set nor followed a fashion and is barely known to the reading public. But, unlike another enigmatic and highly individual writer, Henry Green, she has her passionate advocates. Her novels examine, in Hilary Spurling's phrase, 'the emotional shambles of the human heart'. They are set, or rather confined, in shabby country houses at the turn of the century, peopled with large Machiavellian families whose lives are spent in plotting and intriguing for power. The Compton-Burnett hall-mark is a loaded dialogue in which families battle it out. Children and parents, brothers and sisters, masters and servants are locked in a bitter, often sexual struggle made more savage by their outward observance of civilised rules. As Angus Wilson has observed, 'In the age of the concentration camp. . . she wrote her very best novels, no writer did more to illuminate the springs of human cruelty, suffering and bravery.' Or did so more wittily, for she succeeds where Evelyn Waugh failed, in marrying wit with compassion.

But it is, deliberately, a very claustrophobic fictional world. Throughout her novels the scene, the characters and their concerns hardly vary. The only 'development' is an increasing sombreness. As a result, while much admired by fellow writers she barely features in the literary curriculum. Academic critics appear baffled by her peculiar blend of Victorian modernism. They are happier with Virginia Woolf, who lay awake at night in envy of 'the bitter truth and intense originality of Miss Compton-Burnett'. If Hilary Spurling has a fault, it is in glossing over this negative reaction which might have helped to explain Ivy Compton-Burnett's enduring lack of popularity. It was a reaction shared by her publisher Victor Gollancz and her agent Spencer Curtis Brown, neither of whom made much effort to encourage or promote her work.

Ivy Compton-Burnett kept few personal papers and declined to write her memoirs. Consequently Hilary Spurling, who did not know her subject, has had to rely on the memories and papers of friends and relatives and on her reading of the novels. It seems the perfect combination. Ivy was the eldest child of the second family of James Compton-Burnett, a passionate and combative homeopathic doctor and writer. A workaholic, he lived in London hotel rooms to be near his Harley Street practice while his neurotic wife lived in oppressive seclusion in suburban Hove with her seven children and five step-children. The ensuing family tensions were to permeate Ivy's fiction.

The second volume opens with Ivy at 35, the author of a failed novel, shattered by the death of her favourite brother on the Somme and the suicide of her two youngest sisters, and on the verge of subordinating herself as a housekeeper/companion to an older career woman, the writer Margaret Jourdain. For the next 40 years nothing much happens. There are not even little dramas. The two women lived together in a succession of plain, uncomfortable London flats (Ivy hates 'abroad'). Nurtured with tender brusqueness by Miss Jourdain, she recovers her confidence, makes many friends, indulges her sweet tooth and writes 19 novels.

What makes this apparently placid life so fascinating is Mrs Spurling's delicate probings of Ivy's thoughts and feelings through her fiction, combined with a generous scattering of miniature biographies: not of the great writers and artists whom Ivy might have met but didn't, but of the rather quirky, sometimes bohemian, sometimes county set who formed a little court around Margaret and Ivy. Men like Herman Schrijver, homosexual and interior decorator, and Ernest Thesiger, actor, gossip and lacemaker. Ivy's taste for camp men reflected her enjoyment of gossip, malice and wit. But above all, there was the strong minded, heavily built Margaret Jourdain. To some extent this is her biography as much as Ivy's. A pioneering historian of furniture and eminent — if hack — contributor to *Country Life,* she slowly, and in the end graciously, came to terms with Ivy's greater talent. Her death after 32 years of companionship left Ivy bereft.

The public image of Ivy Compton-Burnett, helped along by Cecil Beaton, was of a rather daunting, severe, sharp-eyed, Sibylline woman. Hilary Spurling adds to this warmth, appetite, humour and love. Few biographies written so soon after their subject's death are definitive. This one must be. It is a pity that Hilary Spurling was not on hand to interview the friends and family of Jane Austen. □

LITERATURE
John Herdman

Volcanic

The Thistle Rises: An Anthology of Poetry and Prose by Hugh MacDiarmid
ed. ALAN BOLD *Hamish Hamilton* £12.95
Aesthetics in Scotland
HUGH MACDIARMID *Mainstream* £6.95

Hugh MacDiarmid was an extraordinarily prolific and versatile writer. On the one hand he was a 'pure' poet whose output in his Scots lyrics, in his masterpiece *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle,* and in a number of his later poems in English ranks among the greatest achievements of 20th-century poetry; on the other he was a comprehensive cultural phenomenon, an impassioned and embattled controversialist whose total commitment to the revival of Scottish culture, to the independence of his country and to the liberation of the

Damian Quinn

Daily ritual

For Seamus Heaney

I remember him shovelling the cowshit and piss
from the shadowed partitioned entrails
of the milking shed with a large thick bristle
brush and a flat square-headed spade.
A bucket or two of water; then Seannie
would usher the cows through the low crooked door.

Milking in his private confessional, he was a penitent
staring through the dung-and-grass crusted grill
of the Friesian's underbelly. A black blob
in its grey-white sea could have been Father Reilly's
very reverent head nodding slowly with every respiration and
every inaudible word that Seannie mouthed.

It never took him long —
a few or more unnoticed minutes —
and his penance
to return again the following day.

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consciousness of the working class through Communism found expression in a pouring-forth of discursive prose of varied quality but unfailing liveliness of attack, and spilled over into much of his poetic production. It is hence extraordinarily hard to see him in the round; the *Complete Poems* of 1978 do him full justice as a poet, but until now a ready means of forming some idea of the range and depth of the interests and passions of the whole man has been lacking. It is this lack which *The Thistle Rises* sets out to remedy.

It must be acknowledged that the volume has (in true MacDiarmidian style) given rise to controversy because of certain scholarly shortcomings, and in particular the editor's failure to acknowledge a debt to an earlier anthologist Kenneth Buthlay, whose prose selection *The Uncanny Scot* appeared in 1968. Yet in his central intention, which is to reveal 'the quintessential MacDiarmid' and to make that readily available in a single volume to a wide public, Alan Bold has done the poet proud. While I would have argued for a more generous selection from the early lyrics and especially from *A Drunk Man*, where his poetic greatness is most unmistakably concentrated, the choice from the later work in English, the political poetry and the poetry of fact which so often soars beyond its theoretical confines in the vehemence of its imaginative thrust, could scarcely be bettered — all the best is there.

Almost all of MacDiarmid's poems from the Thirties onwards were designed as constituent pieces of projects on a huge scale, shattered monuments to his unquenchable ambition to express the inexpressible, to hook and land Leviathan, to utter the 'Omnific Word'. Yet reading in a selection like this, free of the rubbish thrown up along with the pure flame in the eruption of his creative volcano, we can see in poems like 'On a Raised Beach', 'In the Slums of Glasgow', 'The Glass of Pure Water', 'The North Face of Liathach' and 'Direadh III', an imaginative unity which needs no externally imposed architectonic to reveal its inner coherence. In the best of this poetry the stuff of politics and of scientific fact is made to glow with its own interior light as MacDiarmid absorbs it into his intensely imagined metaphysical vision. It by no means happens always, and when it doesn't the failure can be as resounding as the success; but in art, as J. Russell Lowell put it in words which MacDiarmid once applied to John Davidson, 'Not failure, but low aim, is crime'.

'All his life', Alan Bold points out in his introduction, 'MacDiarmid was a fast and fluent journalist who could turn out copy to order, and in doing so he often illuminated issues crucial to his poetry.' In the section of *The Thistle Rises* devoted to 'Matters of Fact and Philosophy' we find him establishing a theoretical basis for the Scottish Renaissance, celebrating the richness of the natural beauty which surrounded him during his boyhood in Langholm, plunging into controversy and dispute about every aspect of Scottish cultural life, musing on islands, evoking and defending with incomparable bite and panache the drinking habits of 'The Dour Drinkers of Glasgow'. *In extenso* MacDiarmid can be an exhausting and irritating theoriser, given to inordinate quotation from other writers and wearing the reader out with sheer excess of certainty. This latter quality is unusual in modern writers and, while it can irritate, it also aroused admiration, bound up as it is with the unfailing robustness, the intellectual toughness which made MacDiarmid at 85 as lively and doughty a polemicist as he had been at 30.

Perhaps, however, the most valuable service which *The Thistle Rises* does MacDiarmid is to make us aware of the range and quality of his talents as a writer of creative prose, an area which has suffered from comparative critical neglect. In the early Twenties he was writing intensely cerebral stories combining stream-of-consciousness techniques with evocations of fevered consciousness reminiscent of Dostoevsky and the Rilke of *Malte Laurids Brigge;* but within a year or two he had turned to tales of Scottish country life, written with great naturalness and vivacity in a supple and highly expressive Scots prose which allows a remarkable inwardness of psychological observation. The quirkiness of several of the pieces suggests an unsettling, disturbed side to MacDiarmid's talent which is seldom hinted at in his poetry.

Aesthetics in Scotland is a previously unpublished text of around 100 pages which Alan Bold has unearthed and edited with a lucid explanatory introduction. Calmer in tone and more painstakingly argued than most of MacDiarmid's critical essays, it throws useful light on his perceptions of the ills of Scottish culture and his hopes for their ultimate cure. The book has been finely produced by Mainstream of Edinburgh. □

AFRICA
Dennis Duerden

Selected bits

The Story of Africa
BASIL DAVIDSON *Mitchell Beazley/ Channel Four Television* £12.95

Africa is a vast continent and it has a correspondingly long history providing traces of our earliest ancestors five hundred thousand years ago. The history of its art begins with the earliest rock engravings in North Africa from about 11,000 BC. Therefore, it is not surprising if one well-illustrated book to supplement a television series provides only a very selective and partial view. It can be divided into two parts. The first provides a history of some kingdoms in the North West of the continent, one kingdom in the South-East and a few towns down the East coast in the late Middle Ages.

The second part describes the destruction of the Medieval civilisations first by the slave trade and then by colonialist and modern neo-colonialist capitalism in search of raw materials. The Medieval kingdoms were splendid and magnificent, we are told, made so first by the introduction of iron-smelting to provide them with weapons and then by the discovery of vast quantities of gold which provided early modern Europe's currency. This history of a series of powerful hegemonies ended soon after the ships of the first European explorers appeared on the horizon and Europe's trade in gold no longer needed Islamic middle-men.

Clearly it is impossible to detail many of the deficiencies in a review of this length and the result would be the substitution of yet another incomplete vision of Africa, already notorious for the part it has played as a palimpsest in the Europeans' fevered imagination. Nevertheless, while recognising that African history is still fragmentary, it is surprising to find some of the most important fragments missing from Davidson's account. After years of research he has composed a particular interpretation of African history revolving around powerful and wealthy male hegemonies but there is evidence to suggest an alternative view. He includes an illustration of the famous Benin bronze representing a queen mother, but nowhere does he include an account of the institutions which revolved around this figure. Ronald Cohen published a paper (*Africa*, 1977) in which he described the working of this institution in a small North Eastern Nigerian kingdom, Biu, in recent years. There the queen mother lives in a separate residence in an exposed position in order to protect the king from his rivals who are related to him. One of the most important features of Great Zimbabwe is not that it was an imposing edifice which could have been built only by a powerful black king, thus embarrassing exponents of white superiority, but that there were two large stone buildings and one of them is reported by modern Shona people to have been occupied by a queen mother.

The institution of the queen mother can profitably be used to throw light on many other African states, both north and south of the equator, and there is evidence that it existed at ancient Meroe. It was the basis of a bureaucracy staffed by women at the court of the Alafin of Oyo, described by the Rev Samuel Johnson in his *History of the Yorubas* (Nigeria). It explains the presence of the Amazons attending the Fon of Dahomey in Sir Richard Burton's 19th-century account. It played a large part in the transfer of power in Ghana before 1850. Theories of matriarchy are now in a state of eclipse, exposed as a male kind of compensatory phantasy, but the effect of women on African courts in breaking down the hegemony and dispersing the power in the smaller African communities which made up the kingdoms should be examined carefully.

Africa is still a mystery which refuses to give up its ancient secrets and its people are still behaving in the manner described by Herodotus, when they left their heaps of gold on the beach and shunned contact with the Carthaginian traders. Davidson omits to tell us that the people of Great Zimbabwe behaved in a similar manner — trading their copper but keeping the foreigners outside and at arm's length. The modern African protective screen takes the form of difficult languages which few of us ever learn. Many of its people still remain arrogantly aloof, but the rest of the world will never be the same again after the 20th-century impact of Africa's art and culture, its cubist art and its polyrhythmic music. The continent is a jigsaw with thousands of pieces and Basil Davidson has chosen a selected few of them. □

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PAPERBACKS
Alan Brien

Lovely one

'EVEN AS I sit and write, millions of bacteria are gnawing away at my precious spinal cord, and if you put your ear to my back the sound of gnawing I dare say could be heard.'

Rather incautiously Hogarth Press have prominently printed this quote from W.N.P. Barbellion's **The Journal of a Disappointed Man** (£4.95) on its back cover. Not having read since adolescence this extraordinary chronicle of a wasting life, chopped short in 1919 by multiple sclerosis, I wondered whether it would now prove too harrowing and painful for someone no longer armoured with the steely optimism of youth.

I need not have worried.

'Barbellion', a name he took from a posh Bond Street sweetshop, had early developed a passionate talent for zoology. But learning, at the age of 25, that he was condemned to an early death, he decided that instead his great achievement, his claim to fame, his legacy to his widow and child, would have to be the journal he had begun at 13.

He need not have worried either.

The result is a fantastic piece of clinical introspection, not only, as he called it, 'a self-portrait in the nude', but a laboratory record, kept by the experimental animal, of body and soul being flayed alive. His voice, talking to himself, unreels inside the reader's head like an alternative, interior monologue. He is self-centred rather than egotistical — that is, he measures everything by himself, but not to his own advantage.

He discovers, admires, resents James Joyce — 'Damn! it's all my idea, the technique I projected.' He monitors reactions to his disintegrating appearance — a street urchin shouts after him, *'Bovril!'* Obsessed by a lovely unknown in a photographer's window, he reports — 'It embittered me to think of having to leave her to some other man.' He charts unworthy reactions — 'I hate elderly women who mention their legs. It makes me shudder.'

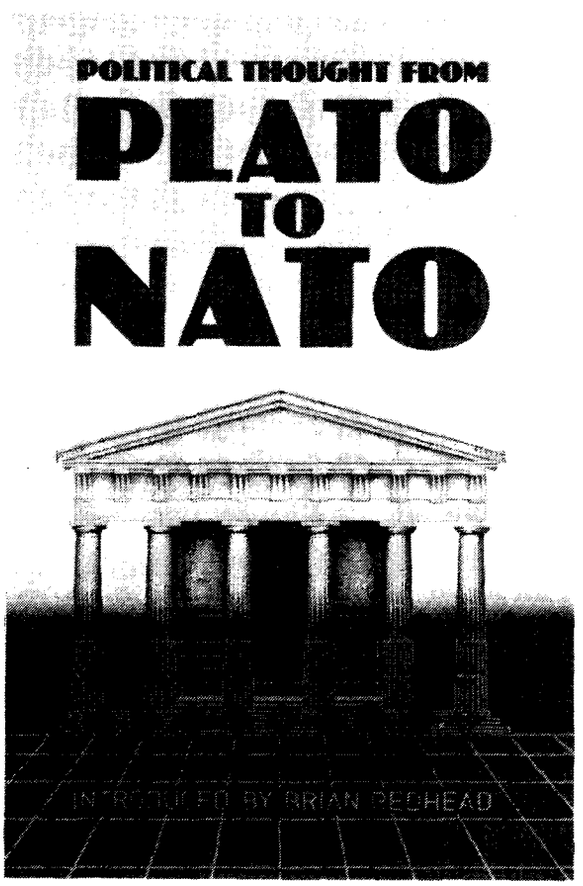
The effect is exhilarating, rather than depressing. These are dispatches of a brilliant foreign correspondent from what he epitomises, in a typically indelible phrase, as 'the big, dirty city of ill-health'.

Henry Channon, dubbed by Lady Pamela Berry 'the Man who Bought London', arrived in Europe as Barbellion was on his death-bed. Heir to an American fortune, his first conquests were in Paris where he became an intimate of Proust, and Cocteau remarked that his eyes were 'set by Cartier'. Later, in London, he married a Guinness, was noted for lavish hospitality, and no doubt could have afforded to have any of his organs be-jewelled.

Chips: The Diaries of Henry Channon (Penguin, £4.95) covers only the years from 1935, when he became an MP, to 1958 and his death, concentrating on his social and political fun and games. The entry no radical reader ever forgets occurs on 27 September 1935 — 'It is very difficult to spend less than £200 a morning when one goes out shopping.' (Multiply at least by ten for present-day value). Since 'Chips' was not only often bitchy in himself, but the butt of bitchery in others, almost every page glitters with malice and insight into the parliamentarians and socialites of the period.

Claud Cockburn used to say that Channon should have left his psyche to the nation so that scientists could examine the unique case of the man who actually *loved* Neville Chamberlain. **Cockburn Sums Up** (Quartet, £4.95) conflates his three volumes of autobiography with a coda covering his final year of typically resilient and sparky refusal to be overawed by the word cancer. As almost everyone knows by now, Cockburn was a master anecdotalist, his tales of an adventurous, charmed career teased out with a timing that may seem artless but is highly polished and professional.

But what seems more rarely noticed is how obsessively in all these pages he protects his own private life. Nowhere here, or in his *Who's Who* entry, is there mention of his first wife, or his daughter Claudia who married the entertainer Michael Flanders. The volumes are as innocent of sex as a Victorian official biography. Perhaps he was too long a salaried conspirator, and free-lance survivor, ever really to drop his guard. ▷



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André Gide, whose **Journals: 1889-1949** (Penguin, £6.95) are now reprinted, was dismissed by young 'Chips' Channon as 'a dreadful, unkempt poet-looking person', by inference the sort who gave homosexuality a bad name. These 60 years of pulse-taking and thermometer-shaking, literally and metaphorically, are often cited as classics of candid self-revelation. I must say I found this an odd judgment of someone who, at least in Justin O'Brien's selection, makes no mention of his marriage (date wrongly given in the frontispiece as 1892) and whose illegitimate daughter, Catherine, is never identified, either by diarist or editor, until she makes an appearance as a toddler. The best remarks are all other people's. Gide's own, like so many Gallic aphorisms, seem to come apart while being translated.

The London that 'Chips' bought was a square mile ghetto of the rich and famous, the rulers and the manipulators. Prominent among the inhabitants were the Mitford sisters. Sir Harold Acton's memoir, **Nancy Mitford** (Hamish Hamilton, £4.95), is a model of its kind, the funny, lively, touching extended epitaph we would all like to survive us.

Not that Nancy seemed to have much to conceal, though I was disillusioned to learn that she, in 1945 a self-proclaimed socialist, came in the end to the callous élitism, the conviction of inborn superiority, which seems a family trait. Her final years of devouring illness were softened by the devotion of a North African servant, Hassan, about whom she writes, 'He is a dear soul but the thought of giving him a vote makes me shriek. My considered opinion is that the world has been wretched since the abolition of slavery.'

This is mild stuff compared to the unwavering dedication to dictatorship of her sister, Diana, Lady Mosley. **A Life of Contrasts** (Hamish Hamilton, £4.95) is a fascinating work, as if dictated by a beautiful, intelligent, but fatally marmoreal statue, in which we and our friends are the only ones who are ever right, and Right.

She is witty, logical, observant, but somewhere there is an area of feeling for other people, a quality of empathy, that has never been thawed from marble into flesh. The best epitome of Lady Mosley is the quote by Sir Harold Acton in his life of her sister. Imprisoned during the war as a Fascist sympathiser, she revealed how she kept an advantage over her gaolers — 'It was still lovely to wake up in the morning and feel one was lovely *one*.' □

THE PASSION OF JAMESIE COYLE

by Michael Foley

'The funniest book to have come out of Northern Ireland for a long time.'
— New Statesman

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FICTION
Grace Ingoldby

Biting

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PAUL THEROUX *Hamish Hamilton* £6.95

Variations of the Deadly Nip (women, advancing Japanese, conscience, snake-bite) threaten the characters of Keneally's latest novel set in Canberra — 'Kings are not buried here. . .' — in 1942. The tale is told by Paper Tyson, a political journalist who describes himself as a 'war memorial', the private who had both knees blown inside out in 1915, a physical symbol of 'the ambiguities of helping and trusting any creature of the northern hemisphere', and opens at the Branch Office (pet name for the parliament building) as news filters through of the fall of Singapore, not yet registered on the map which shows no sign that 'Asia was transformed . . . that gin and muffins had been driven from that latitude'.

Paper with his 'anti-war warp' and his long-standing friendship with the PM Johnny Mulhall is thus well placed to chart the course of politics in action; the novel pivots on the increasing strain on this friendship, bent as much by Johnny's dangerous liaison with a general's wife as by the threat that Mulhall, ex-boy-trade-unionist man of the people, may now introduce conscription, has turned or is turning into the 'practical' politician. The always unspoken clause in their friendship, 'that he did not use me, in direct terms, to plant favourable copy and I did not use him as a source for what I could discover by my normal diligence' is screwed as circumstances alter cases and Paper becomes the runner between Johnny and the general's wife, the pained observer of Johnny the orator urging the miners for coal, 'talking to their deeps. . . stirring the wells of their historic griefs. . . using words that carried a sort of freight of holiness with them'. Paper, the 'unbuttoned late-night friend', now marks the buffer state between Johnny and the straight-talking campaigners of the old days: 'Your friend Mulhall quick enough conscripts workers but when does he conscript wealth, eh?'; 'Very few of you buggers go through the business of getting yourselves any seat in any parliament in this country without ending up with the souls of grocers'. Moreover, in a coma induced by snake-bite, Paper also observes himself, 'a beast of margin, the brush stroke on the edge of the picture. . .' This is a great big book, big generals in generous shorts holding court like Romans from their tents, big issues, a solid, unpretentious, well told elephant of a story through which Keneally moves, like his legless narrator, as nimbly as a gnat.

The stories of the late Dino Buzzati selected for **Restless Nights** put reality firmly in its place as a very frail conception; this is fantasy at its most inventive, its least irritating, its most disquieting best. As an experienced journalist Buzzati was well aware of the absurdity that lurks beneath the surface and his stories, told with journalistic technique, bedded securely in the known and the plausible, treat fantasy realistically with interesting results. Sendak said somewhere that by starting with the known you can take your reader anywhere and Buzzati does just this — up the Eiffel Tower, down into the dungeon and to the possible end of the world on 12 October in the quiet village of Stut. These are restless nights, not tormented ones; Buzzati teases rather than tortures.

> Man is an unforseen anomaly which came about during the evolutionary process, not the result to which evolution necessarily had to lead. Is it really conceivable that nature's workshop deliberately put into circulation an animal that is simultaneously weak, very intelligent and mortal, that is, in other words, inevitably unhappy?

This is frailty reflected upon with affection rather than anguish and what emerges strongly here is the public fear of the absurd, of the power of fantasy over fact (a clue to why Buzzati, acclaimed by Camus, compared with Calvino, Kafka, Borges, was popular elsewhere but not here?) Rather as in Kundera's *The Joke* where laughter is considered dangerous, so the fanciful enrages the solid citizens of these stories. When the building of the Eiffel Tower gets out of hand (higher than requested) they 'sent up a courier with an ultimatum; if you bastards don't surrender and come down immediately we'll open fire with rifles, machine guns and light artillery'. The Bogeyman gets similar treatment from the good folk as Buzzati ends this wonderful collection, 'Hurry, fly away, superstitious fantasies. The civil world, eager to exterminate you, follows in hot pursuit.'

Hancock would sympathise with **Dr Slaughter,** a bright American female research fellow stuck in a London that isn't London in the way that China, Hong Kong *et al* have gone right off:

> You've never been there or else you wouldn't be so wild about Hong Kong. China's just boring and depressing but Hong Kong is worse. . . if it was human you'd say it was tasteless, spoiled, overweight and had high blood pressure.

London, winter-dark, is 'a sink' peopled by podgy, cigarette-smoking, slobbering dogmeat. It literally bores the pants off Slaughter who turns unashamedly to escorting dogmeat types to bed when she fails to get on a study tour of Kuwait. Slaughter describes herself sexually as 'user-friendly' and, as a non-drinking vegie, she monitors everything that goes into her body including the men who look 'mugged' afterwards and the Arabs who grind their teeth and cry 'Allah!' Theroux is *The* spokesman for the Tourist Board, adept, zippy and ebulliently cruel to any character or place that dares to creep into the pages of his book. Slaughter's double life inevitably ends in tears — no amount of stretching exercises or steamed veg. can insulate her against common fear. Altogether a rampantly beastly book, super-modern and, in its squalid, sad way, very funny. □

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The Strange History of Bonnie and Clyde

JOHN TREHERNE *Cape* £8.95

Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow were not Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty; they were not even good crooks according to John Treherne's authoritative account. Clyde was a petty criminal who achieved notoriety through incompetence and panic; and Bonnie, well, she just fell for Clyde.

Their first robbery ended with getaway by mule and a few weeks later Clyde burst into a bank only to discover that it had closed down four days earlier. Their rise to Most Wanted status was based on violence rather than criminal acumen. Even John Dillinger complained that they 'were giving decent bank robbers a bad name'. At the first sign of trouble Clyde would begin blasting away at lawmen, bystanders, young and old alike before roaring off in a car with a haul of a few dollars. Behind the wheel Clyde came into his own. A cross between a bungling Jesse James and a violent Dean Moriarty, he made countless escapes from police traps. For getaways he preferred a Ford and wrote to Henry Ford to compliment him on 'what a dandy car' he made.

For two years Bonnie and Clyde evaded pursuers whose antics were often as ill-judged (often fatally) as their own: one inspired sheriff disguised his officers as undertakers and sped around the Mid-West in a hearse in the hope of a confrontation. Their time on the run was miserable (especially for Bonnie who was badly burned after Clyde rolled a car) and farcical since Clyde's insistence on clean, pressed shirts necessitated frequent and dangerous trips to the laundrette. With a keen eye for style he also got Bonnie to alter a suit so that he could wear a sawn-off shotgun down his trouser leg.

When they were eventually shot to pieces by police the bodies of Bonnie and Clyde were mutilated by souvenir hunters who tried to hack off Clyde's trigger finger and yanked out handfuls of hair from Bonnie's head.

The Bonnie and Clyde industry had begun. John Treherne convincingly details the transformation of two 'vicious thieves' into folk heroes as successive generations have found, especially in film, the version of events they want. Relying heavily on 'the well-documented powers which psychopaths can exert over their women', Treherne's psychologising is sometimes less convincing. On occasions (and there are places where the writing is a bit flat) one wishes that he were more of a novelist but his concern, unlike that of his machine-gunning protagonists, is with accuracy rather than effect. In any case the story is gripping enough to get by without help.

Geoff Dyer

The Breadstealers: The Fight against the Corn Laws, 1838-1846

NORMAN LONGMATE *Temple Smith* £14.50

For a number of years Norman Longmate has been producing popular studies of aspects of 19th- and 20th-century social history. Some of his books have broken new ground; for instance, his study of the temperance movement predated Brian Harrison's standard work by several years. Similarly, his book on cholera was the first full-length study of the social effects of that disease.

The same cannot be said of this book. Not only are there good, if occasionally pedestrian, accounts of the Anti-Corn Law League both nationally and in its local manifestations, but the political context of the movement is thoroughly known and worked on. It will be many, many years, for instance, before Norman Gash's superb, if high Tory, life of Sir Robert Peel can be supplanted or even added to. As for the much famed debates on the repeal of the Corn Laws and their supposed ending of the agricultural interest as a power in the land, any cursory glance through the history of the succeeding 40 years reveals just how wrong such a view can be.

Like all Norman Longmate's work, *The Breadstealers* is clearly written and well put together. It covers the history of the movement up to the repeal of corn duties in 1846, often making good use of contemporary materials. Even the most famous of these strike a chord. There are few people in this country who do not occasionally need reminding of Byron's damning couplet,

> For what were all these country patriots born,
> To hunt, and vote, and raise the price of corn?

There is also a good sense of the League's 'men'. James Acland, the League's main speaker in the South and East of England, not surprisingly had a very rough time of it in this, most unpropitious territory. Beset by debt, by the hired mobs of farmers and by the League's constant inability to pay wages and expenses, he emerges as a minor hero.

However, in the end, the book adds little to our knowledge of the movement, especially at local level, and is absurdly anti-Chartist, for some reason which is never clear (which obscures the real areas of contact between these two movements). Also, its value as a school library book, often the virtue of such a work as this, is considerably lowered by the price which, though not high by modern standards, means that it would have to be a good deal better before its purchase could be justified.

Alun Howkins

What Kind of Country: Modern Irish Politics 1968-1983

BRUCE ARNOLD *Cape* £12.50 & £3.95

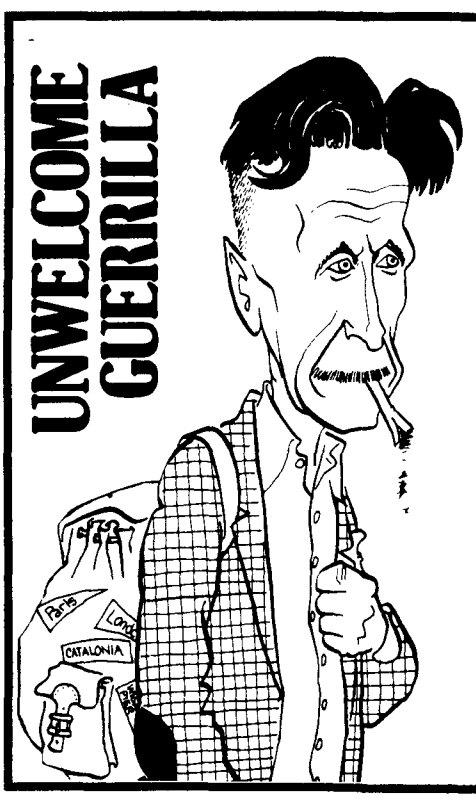
Bruce Arnold achieved a passing notoriety in November 1982 when the *Irish Times* reported that he was one of two prominent Dublin journalists whose telephone had been tapped by the outgoing Fianna Fail Minister for Justice, Sean Doherty. British-born and erstwhile Dublin correspondent for the *Guardian*, Arnold incurred Fianna Fail's suspicions for being, according to the Department of Justice, 'anti-national in his outlook'. In the coded language of Irish politics, this meant that he was too uncomfortably critical of Fianna Fail's holier-than-thou claims to be Ireland's 'Republican Party'.

Now the parliamentary correspondent for the *Irish Independent*, the most 'Catholic' of Ireland's three national dailies, Arnold gives a breezy account of the intricacies of the Irish political scene from the first murmurings of the civil rights movement in 1968 to the 1982 general election which returned a stable and confident Fine Gael-Labour coalition. Arnold's chief strength lies in his disentangling of the disparate threads which make up the Republic's largest political party, Fianna Fail. Founded by de Valera to oppose the Anglo-Irish treaty sanctioning partition, Fianna Fail soon became the mouthpiece of what Arnold calls 'soft republicanism', that is the ability to moan about the evil of partition while remaining wilfully vague on how to put it right. While this attitude sufficed in de Valera's lifetime, it became increasingly untenable as the Derry Citizens' Defence Committee began erecting barricades in the Bogside in 1969.

As expected, Charles Haughey is not somebody for whom Arnold feels a deep affection. Haughey is regarded as a 'machine politician' who ultimately became a victim of the 'secrecy he himself imposed over his own views'. His slippery performances in the 1970 Arms Trial as well as the phone-tapping incident are carefully recounted, and Haughey emerges as a political survivor of the first rank, weak on ideology but strong on pragmatism.

The book's weakness is that it tells a story that has not yet finished. Instead of stopping at the 1982 general election, Arnold outlines Fitzgerald's first year as Taoiseach, trying clumsily to relate the recent abortion referendum to his overall narrative. Aside from this small blemish, however, the book does an admirable job of putting Irish politics of the last 15 years into a thoughtful and constructive perspective.

Michael Lewis



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Mean, macho and clean-living: The New Model Army from Bradford

PUNK IS DEAD in letter but not in spirit. That is the message from a new school of groups who do not make videos and whose motif is righteous political anger.

The fact that everyone and his cousin is poncing around in silly haircuts is, they argue, no excuse for not being visibly in revolt at all times.

Punk's spirit lives on not so much in the orthodox spiketop faction, which has ghettoised itself to a point where it no longer interacts with popular culture at all, but in bands who unashamedly use pop to fashion, as The Sex Pistols did, anti-popular music. The Redskins, for example, whose vibrant soul hooks and brass sections provide melodic meat for sloganeering anthems like 'Unionize!' Others include The Three Johns, iAction Pact! and Billy Bragg.

The new Antipop rejects both the austere tribalism of the anarcho-vegetarian Crassites and the megalomaniac theatre of The Cult or Kirk Brandon's Spear of Destiny, but at its most missionary it indulges in one of the very things punk ridiculed: macho rock power. The crusade against synthesisers and haircuts, against all that is false and artificial in modern pop, appears to stem from that absurd moment when Tony Parsons saw the light shining down from Joe Strummer's guitar.

There is a new proletarian sentimentality afoot, as if tolerance for Boy George and his ilk were a bourgeois deviation from the proper spirit of youth. Proletarian rock now has its spokesman in the Seething Workers Party, which revolves around ranting poet Seething Wells and The Redskins' Chris Dean, a skinhead version of Paul Weller. Both voice their many opinions under pseudonyms in *NME,* both are extremely articulate and you wouldn't have to press either too hard for them to say that all the pop frivolities have 'simply gone on too long'.

The Seething Workers Party is about Guitars and Official Picket armbands — what Wells calls 'balls'. It might concede that The Clash are a bit of a cliché now, but it still believes that pop and rock are means to ends. It would like to see music stop being a symptom and start acting like a cause.

The ballsiest combo carrying a banner for the new populist agitrock is Bradford trio New Model Army. They are also the band who flirt the least self-consciously with the classical poses of male rock: clenched fists, phallicised guitars, gnashing teeth. In this respect, they are perhaps more honest than the Staxified horn arrangements The Redskins purloined from Dexys Midnight Runners.

New Model Army's singer Slade the Leveller positively revels in the crassness of it all.

> There's this thing about heavy metal and punk and never the twain shall meet, whereas if you look at Killing Joke or Sisters Of Mercy, they're pure heavy metal bands. Basically, it's just a really exciting thing to do, to get onstage in front of 4,000 people. It would take a much more conscious effort to stand still and pretend you *weren't* excited.

Slade's agitrock is far from being a red rant, in fact. If anything, his politics veer suspiciously towards the authoritarian. (I wouldn't have believed a non-heavy metal band could entitle a record 'Vengeance' until New Model Army did.) This would seem to be the ironic result of pushing the rebel rock pose to the limit, which doesn't detract from the music's power as hard rock punk. 'Vengeance' is exciting in a way Theatre of Hate never were, but the moral passions behind the title track ('I believe in getting the bastards') and 'A Liberal Education' ('We didn't want a victory, we just wanted to fight') make Slade sound like a rabble-rouser. Is he really a paternalist in outlaw's clothing?

> Everyone thinks that on one side you've got to have total authoritarianism and on the other total anarchy, with nothing in between. It's an example of people giving up and not thinking for themselves. You've got to sort out the middle ground or this society will collapse. In a way, the lyrics of 'Vengeance' and 'Liberal Education' *are* reactionary, but at least they keep the debate open.
>
> 'Liberal Education' is about parents and teachers abdicating responsibility. Children become strong and self-willed by taking on authority, and if they win too easily, because the authority just sort of dissolves, you get children who are basically very weak. I think a lot of people these days *are* very weak.

Which presumably goes for all the kids who buy records by Culture Club and Duran Duran. New Model Army aren't *all* about 'strength', it must be said; 'Christian Militia' and 'Spirit of the Falklands' redress their political balance. Like Sir Thomas Fairfax's original Army, though, Slade the Leveller is a puritan.

> I'm not going to thrust it down anyone's throat, but I don't drink very much and I don't take drugs. We're not terribly in love with the old rock self-destructive bit, although I've a terrible feeling that we'd be more successful if we were.

For Slade, the only danger lies in 'doing' it too long. Whether or not success turns him into another hypocrite showbiz rebel remains to be seen. One thing seems to me indisputable: the first thing any self-respecting revolution would do with rock, personality cult extraordinaire, is ban it. □

OPERA
Andrew Clements

Tunnel vision

LAST WEEK the Royal Opera revealed its plans for the 1984/'85 season. They make depressing reading, for all the careful window dressing and the promise of eight new productions; there is a lack of imagination and enterprise apparent in every detail, a calculated retrenchment into a conservative repertory.

Before looking at the schedules in any detail it's worth reminding ourselves of what the Royal Opera should be and how — lest we make invidious comparisons with the more imaginative policies of English National Opera — its programming is shaped by that profile. While ENO aims to offer a wide range of works given in English with predominantly home-grown singers and conductors, Covent Garden is very much an international opera house, spreading its artistic net much more widely to capture the best possible talent. Because American and continental singers can command much higher fees than their British counterparts budgets at the ROH are correspondingly higher; rightly or wrongly, to compete at the highest level the house must spend lavishly, a fact recognised in the recent Priestley Report on the ROH's financing.

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Whether all that money is generally spent wisely or well in artistic terms is another matter. The number of spectacular disasters in the last few seasons appears to have outweighed the successes: while one can only be grateful for Friedrich's *Lulu* and Tarkovsky's *Boris Godunov*, the remembrance of the gruesome *Esclarmonde* and the farrago of *Manon Lescaut* will take a lot of forgiving. The administration seems incapable of resisting anything glossily packaged; there is evidence of the same catchpenny thinking in coming productions.

Turandot will be seen at the Los Angeles Olympic Arts Festival before opening the new season at Covent Garden, and will be followed soon afterwards by *Tannhäuser*, performed in the Dresden version. No one, I think, will complain about either of those. But London opera-goers need a new *Der Rosenkavalier* or *Ariadne auf Naxos* like a hole in the head: what was wrong with the old *Rosenkavalier* one wonders, or has it simply been scrapped so that the combined talents of Solti and John Schlesinger can be lavished upon a new staging? And what can be the justification for a production of Rossini's *La donna de lago*, save that it is a co-presentation with the Houston Opera and offers the chance to bring together Marilyn Horne and Frederica Von Stade?

In the context of a wide-ranging and enterprising programme some of these sprees would be forgiveable. But when they represent the probable highpoints of a season of routine revivals they arouse some irritation, and the position could seem a lot worse before the season is through, for, of the eight new productions, only four have yet attracted commercial sponsorship — *Turandot, Rosenkavalier, Donna del lago* and Handel's *Samson* in an edition by Julius Rudel that is described by the ROH as 'romantic'. One of the recommendations of the Priestley Report was that the Royal Opera House should offer more popular operas in their schedules, and this has apparently been taken up with alacrity: a new *Barber of Seville*, revivals of *Tosca, Carmen, Don Giovanni, Fledermaus, Magic Flute, Lucia di Lammermoor, Bohème, Cosi fan tutte.*

The major casualty of this bid for populism has been 20th-century works. From the 60 years of operatic history since the death of Puccini there is only the revival of the old Wanamaker staging of Tippett's *King Priam*, which is all that is left of a plan to include all four Tippett operas in the composer's 80th-birthday year. At least ENO has picked up the new *Midsummer Marriage* which was to have been part of the celebration and one hopes the Royal Opera feels a certain shame. Somehow, though, I doubt it. It is quite clear that contemporary opera comes very low on the list of priorities. There is a whole catalogue of projects that appear to have collapsed. There were rumours of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtensk*, or Edward Cowie's *Ned Kelly*, of Stockhausen's *Donnerstag*, of a commission from Aulis Sallinen. With the conspicuous absence of any of these (the last opera premiered at Covent Garden was John Tavener's *Therèse* in 1979), one could legitimately wonder whether the Royal Opera has any interest at all in the continued viability of opera or whether it has become content to retail an ever-narrowing repertoire to an ever more complacent audience. □

FILMS
John Coleman

As it happens

To Our Loves (15)
Camden Plaza
Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom (PG)
Empire
Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter (18)
Plaza
The Man Who Loved Women (15)
Studio; Cinecenta
The Man Who Knew Too Much (PG)
Electric Screen; Classics, Chelsea and Tottenham Court Road

Maurice Pialat, born 1925, has now made six remarkable feature films, constantly crops up for praise when his fellow-directors are being interviewed about the state of French cinema and yet remains almost unknown over here. It was only when his last film, *Loulou*, with the star-names of Gérard Depardieu and Isabelle Huppert as bait, got a public showing early in 1981 and the NFT concurrently put on a short season of all his full-length works to date, that some sort of awareness of his potent, disturbing talent began to filter through. (BBC-TV had also shown the 1974 *La Gueule Ouverte*, which had appeared at that year's London Film Festival, and the 1968 LFF earlier gave a few of us a chance to catch his superb debut, *L'Enfance Nue*.)

Pialat may not be the world's most winsome director. As I noted, reviewing *Loulou*, thumbnail summaries incline to do him a disservice, implying a universe of unrelieved gloom, where death and separation reign. But, against that, one must set the countering and stimulating alertness of his observation, a kind of cumulative *pointillisme*: he may be deadly serious — he is never deadeningly solemn.

In fact, there is sometimes a flaring dry humour (as when Depardieu's Loulou pulls up the bedsheet to take a quick, complacent peek at his equipment); inevitably so, given the unforced naturalism of Pialat's procedures. **To Our Loves** (*A Nos Amours*) has its small, flickering instances, part of the rueful, wayward whole.

Absolutely at the centre of this piece, spanning a couple of years, is the performance — or living presence — of Sandrine Bonnaire as Suzanne, first discovered as a wilful 15-year-old at summer camp. She breaks bounds to visit a boyfriend Luc (Cyr Boitard) in his nearby tent, abruptly rejects his advances, is soon casually letting herself be seduced by an American pick-up, who ignores her next day. (He'd said, 'Thanks a lot,' rolling off her, and she had replied, 'You're welcome. It's free'.) Home again, at the big apartment where her bearded father (Maurice Pialat himself) runs a pokey furrier's business, brother Robert (Dominique Besnehard) helps out and mother (Evelyne Ker) looks distraught, young Suzanne comes into growing conflict with all three, starts skipping school and sleeping around, crucially confesses to one of her lovers, *'J'ai l'impression d'avoir le coeur sec'* ('I feel my heart is dry'). By then, her beloved Polish immigrant father — having moodily forewarned Suzanne, whom *he* loves — has just upped and gone, leaving Robert to be head of the family.

Things seem simply to *happen* in Pialat's films, with the shaking intransigence of life. There are hysterical domestic scenes, with slaps heartily dealt out, mama increasingly demented and plump Robert — of the talked-of writing talent — trying to steer Suzanne into marriage. She decides to go to boarding school, herself escaping; time passes in elliptical editing; then she is indeed married, a last resort, to an amiable young Jean-Pierre. Father disruptingly returns with a prospective tenant for the apartment during a dinner-party. Son Robert has got hitched to the sister of a magazine editor and papa starts sardonically making mischief with this fellow, who is being pompously anti-Picasso. (Suzanne, enjoying the ensuing ruckus, has earlier favoured Bonnard, because he is 'sensual'.) Papa gets a whack from mama and is shown the door, but not before he has delivered a quote — maybe from Van Gogh: 'There will always be sadness'. And, via a last swift cut, there he is, bussing with restless Suzanne to the airport: she is off to San Diego with another man, Michel.

In that freeze-end is the beginning, for Michel was directing Suzanne in a summer-camp production of Musset's *On ne badine pas avec l'amour* at the start. And another opening image — of Suzanne statuesque at the prow of a pleasure-boat speeding along to the vocal accompaniment of Purcell's 'Cold Song' (music to recur briefly twice more) — is not merely breathtaking in itself but surely underlines the conflict within bewildering, real Suzanne between romantic yearnings, an innate restlessness and emotional chilliness. Where this arguably least accessible of Pialat's films comes partly to grief is in some irresolution about how much the girl's heart belongs to daddy, how much his belongs to her. There is a submerged ache, but it lacks definition.

FROM A STORY by George Lucas, who is also its executive producer, Steven Spielberg's **Indiana Jones and the Temple of Love** caps the big-budget Saturday-morning-serial cinematics of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* by being even faster and furiouser. Shot in Macau, Sri Lanka, the States and most of Elstree, it could have been buried in any of these sites for all I care, old misery.

Simply (and the word is used advisedly) as a display of technical and stunting wizardry — the final credits seemed to run for about half-an-hour; my favourite, 'Physical conditioning for Mr Ford by Body by Jake, Inc.' — the 117-minute caper is reasonably prodigious, with giant, cavernous sets, a swaying rope bridge high above croc-infested waters, a mind-boggling chase involving mine-trucks down unspooling miles of tracks, and the Jake-conditioned Harrison Ford once again hurtling through as archaeologist Dr 'Indy' Jones. His companions this time, in a jaunt from Shanghai to an Indian village to evil Pankot Palace and back to the village with a magic stone, are a

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diminutive lad, Shorty (Ke Huy Quan), and the pleasantly assembled and amused-looking Willie (excellent Kate Capshaw), a wailing night-club singer with a wicked left hook. Two or three funny bits, but Spielberg's essential humourlessness (or Lucas's) emerges in a grotesque banquet with eyeball-soup, etc., and some kids may gag at the violence, too.

Cablese: **Friday 13th: The Final Chapter** perfect if counting corpses helps you sleep but disregard that cheating 'final'; Blake Edwards's re-make of Truffaut's **The Man Who Loved Women** an impertinence with Burt Reynolds as compulsive stud and Julie Andrews as gushing analyst; and a lukewarm welcome back to Hitchcock's 1956 **The Man Who Knew Too Much** (James Stewart, Doris Day, 'Che Sera Sera'), his own US re-make of preferable 1934 British version (Peter Lorre as chief villain, and all-round seedier and edgier). □

TELEVISION
Hugo Williams

The drink

THE dramatisation of Ian McEwan's story **The Last Day of Summer** (C4), in which a 20-year-old fat girl's love-friendship with an 11-year-old boy comes to a tragic end, reminded me of the Pompidou Centre. You couldn't help noticing the bulging mechanics.

The plot conspired almost sadistically against the pair. The boy happens to be orphaned so that he can be made to live with his hippy brother in a commune and so be free to come and go on the river as he pleases; the misfit fat girl has found her position in the commune through an advertisement so that her fatal fatness, unsuitable squareness and tendency to hysteria remain hidden from the others until she turns up. Even the baby seems to hate its mother because she keeps popping up to London to see her boyfriend, but loves fat Jenny who takes her on the river. It's suspicious stuff, particularly in retrospect. One wonders what the fictional purpose of the death is. Are we against communes? Or is it the renegade member, the absentee mum, who is to be punished? If it's just that stories need endings to make them more interesting than life then this one looks like an ending in search of a story. There's too much scaffolding. Every detail has but one thing in mind. If the drowning was the gum McEwan needed to chew on for the duration he should have spat it out once it had delivered its morbid flavour to the story. A plot which is all climax undermines the interest of its own wet-scene.

Another play where things proceed normally until they are suddenly called upon to become art — except that here the means seemed to justify the end — was the adaptation of V.S. Pritchett's **The Wedding** (ITV). This was a tale of worse-than-usual male piggery receiving its deserts along with its justification. 'This good sow from Tom Fletcher's farm,' shouts an auctioneer, 'and don't forget he's got a daughter getting married . . .' We get the idea, but who's on the receiving end of all this? It's the tremulous but lyrical schoolmistress, 'Mrs la-di-da Jackson' (Meg Wynn Owen) who wants to make boorish Fletcher (Tom Bell in rustic vein: fatter and older) allow his second daughter to go to Oxford. 'A man's a right to be looked after,' says Fletcher, but Mrs Jackson is just the woman to combat such ignorance. 'Why are women mad about weddings?' he asks her. 'Because we live for the future,' she tells him.

The reception in the marquee — produced with the documentary fervour of a David Storey action play — deteriorates into a bear garden with a drunken art master for scapegoat. He is ragged mercilessly and all but sacrificed like a pig to the savage gods of weddings as the gross farmers practice their steer roping on the left-over women. Fletcher lassoes Jackson: 'At least she has a kick in her.' She jerks the rope through his hand and drives home with it. Her keeping the rope is the point, the 'turn'. It is not the art master who is being sacrificed here, nor even Mrs Jackson, who now volunteers to rattle Fletcher's pots and pans for him: 'I've changed my mind. It's none of my business. If it's a housekeeper you're after . . .' She's patently dying for Fletcher, so the score is equal. She washes her hair and waits in her dressing gown for the fly to come and reclaim his rope. 'I suppose you think she isn't good enough for university,' says her fly. She walks ahead of him into her bedroom — 'You might at least close the door' — and flings the bed covers in the camera's face.

It was a stroke of genius by playwright Maynard Collins, in **Hank Williams, The Show He Never Gave** (C4), to present the life and death of the great country singer in terms of the concert he would like to have given the night he died, instead of the overblown affair he had to go to. A Cadillac travels down an empty country road. In it sits Williams listening to one of his hits on the radio. 'The king of country music!' he sneers as he dreams of his down-home past. His dream becomes substance as Hank in his suit of musical notes and ten-gallon hat arrives out of the blue at some lucky little roadhouse: 'It's him. It really is Hank Williams.'

It is New Year's Eve. The crowd is small, local, family and *country*. As the old year builds towards midnight we get to know some of them in cameo: 'I don't know,' says the barman, holding up a glass, 'I kinda like Eddie Arnold better,' and our understanding grows of Williams's fatal paranoia, for this is his dream, remember. In fact we get to know him almost embarrassingly well as he describes with casual eloquence how he has to tape his bottles inside his guitar to fool his new wife Billy Jean. 'Audrey, that's my first wife, she got my house, my car, my heart. You ask me if I still love her, I'll lie to you and tell you no.' Pure country!

It is interval time and backstage the evening takes on some of the hazards of a real life Williams concert: the bottle, the needle, the Lord. The inevitable 'doc' materialises to give him his little shot for his 'back'. The girl happens. Best of all an old negro turns up to sweep out the dressing room and prove how close blues and country are to each other. Hank barely makes it back on stage. He does a Cajun two-step, falls and wakes up in the car again: nightmare has overtaken fantasy in his mind.

From this point the show takes on a darker shade, as of a last confession: 'Playing one-nighters, that's about as close to hell as you can get.' It turns into a revival meeting for a moment with 'I saw the Light'. 'Except that there ain't no light,' mutters the real Hank. It ends in deep-blue smoke and stillness with the sorrowful 'Men with Broken Hearts' after which he moves slowly through the motionless crowd towards his dressing room like a walking corpse, while a slow bell tolls midnight. The metaphor is complete.

The film depended on the music, the atmosphere and the superb performance of Sneezy Waters. David Acomba had tied the thing together so tight it made your eyes water. And don't say you don't like country music. Any of that nonsense and I'll report you to Mary Harron, who relieves this column in July. She knows Jerry Lee Lewis personally. □

THEATRE
Naseem Khan

Crab-wise

Redemption Song
EDGAR WHITE *Riverside*
Delicatessen
TILLY *Half Moon*
Little Me
NEIL SIMON *Prince of Wales*
The Clandestine Marriage
DAVID GARRICK *Albery*

An Indian diplomat once told me a story about an international handicrafts fair in New York. 'And what's this curious basket?' asked a visitor to the Indian stand. 'Ah, that's for keeping crabs in.' Surely, the visitor protested, they'd escape since the basket had no lid. 'Oh no,' answered the other sunnily. 'They're Indian crabs, you see. As soon as one reaches the top, the others will pull him down again.' Apocryphal, of course, and not behaviour limited to Indian crabs either. I found myself thinking of it, for instance, during Edgar White's new play **Redemption Song**, written for the Black Theatre Co-operative and set on the Caribbean island of Redemption.

To look at, the place seems Paradise: warmth, fertility, tradition, roots — or so it seems to young Legion, returned with relief from years of wretchedness in Britain, where his mother had taken him as a child. What did you learn there, they ask him. 'To be invisible,' is his bitter reply. But it is, White makes clear in this complex play, a naïve return.

For reality confounds romance. The property Legion had been left turns out to have been sold by his wastrel father. (Embezzlement or realism?) The kind and starchy aunt, Miss Beatrice, who takes him in rejects him when it becomes clear his money has run out. And the unthinking liaison he sets under way with the young wife of the island's most powerful self-made man offends all the basic mores. What,

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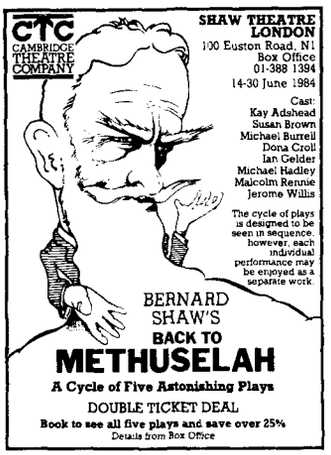

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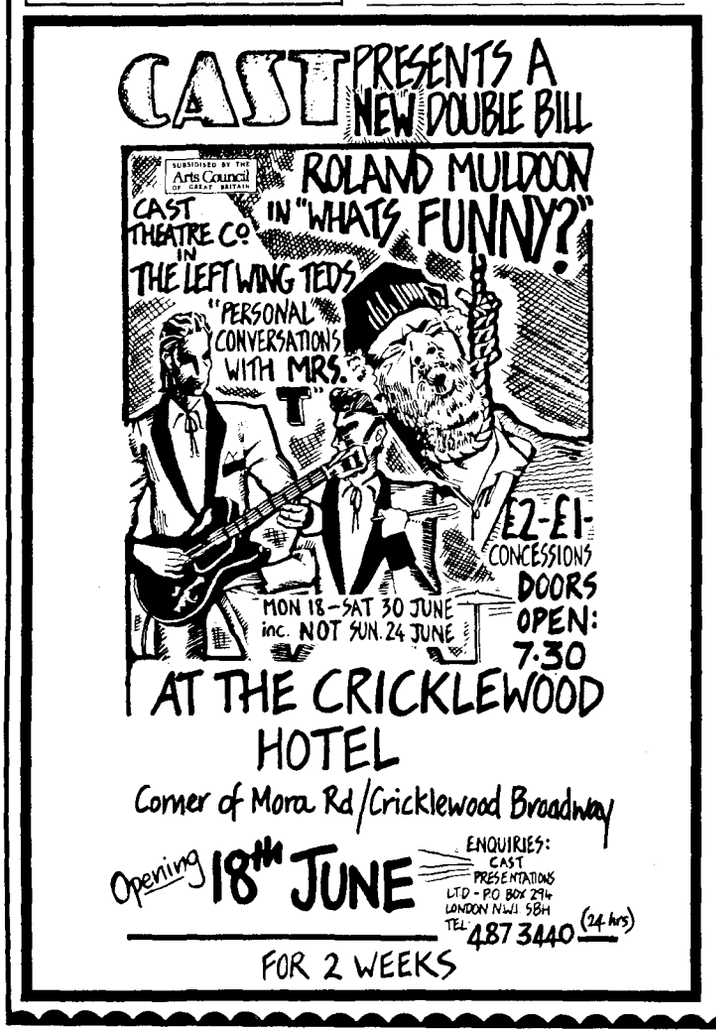
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when he is called to account, has Legion got to offer? A casualty from the big white city, with nothing but a slim volume of verse and a sentence for petty crime behind him, he is ultimately as invisible in Redemption as he was in the Holloway Road. Failing to understand the first thing about the place of his birth, he is destroyed by it.

Beneath the warmth and jokes and bustle of this rambling play is a caustic message. Return is a chimera; and freedom for the ex-colonist is illusory — societies are jealously dominated by the elderly, money rules and departure is the only escape for the young. 'We're still minding the plantation, servant against servant.' Charlie Hanson's direction makes for a warm and confident narrative quality, but it avoids the ambiguity in the play (caught notably by Carmen Munroe as Miss Bea). Victor Romero Evans gives Legion moments of finely-handled pathos, but disappointingly in the end lets him remain a victim, borne unwittingly to disaster.

DISASTER is the subject of Tilly's **Delicatessen** too. Not disaster of the type animal welfare protestors outside the Half Moon mention ('a goldfish is taken out of its bowl and a cat is pulled around') but — again — death of a son who fails to fit into the survival structures of those around him. Beyond that no two plays could differ more. *Redemption Song* is diffuse and diverted by quirks of character. *Delicatessen* is uncompromisingly honed down. There's not an awful lot of speaking — its characters are too busy getting through, before your eyes, the demands of a normal working day. You are told nothing about them, not even their names. There is no sly passing of information at all, and hardly any plot.

It all takes place over 20 hours in the kitchen/living room behind a delicatessen. In this spotless room members of the family and their two assistants come together at mealtimes, meeting briefly in events that are as ritualistic and almost as wordless as a formal dance. Parallel with the incessant obsessive activity runs a carefully controlled vein of almost accidental violence — not so much the goldfish *et al*, but snippets on the news nudging images of murder and blood into this neat kitchen. And the violence of their drunken tearaway son, hard as they try not to acknowledge it, refuses ultimately to be denied.

Derek Goldby's impressive production gives no quarter to the lazy. It holds back all the time, making you work hard for clues among the minimal information given away, steadily increasing the pressure of trivia. Performances are as restrained and enigmatic as the play. It lasts for an hour and a half. It has no interval. If you leave you are not allowed back in, and you can see why.

You'll find no parental/filial traumas in **Little Me** Neil Simon's revived musical. 'Brush your hair and do your chest exercises,' says Momma Schlumfort to her big-eyed daughter. Belle follows this advice and it takes her from rags to riches, with a lot of songs in between. This daft bit of nonsense has its tongue firmly in its cheek, as the accident-prone Belle's sugar daddies (all looking remarkably like Russ Abbott, for it is he) bite the dust. Massed Cossacks wail, snooty rich cavort and the First World War goes dashingly by.

By contrast, **The Clandestine Marriage** by David Garrick, revived by Anthony Quayle for his Compass Theatre Company, was one of the most dispiriting evenings I have spent in a theatre. The basic premise was dubious (young couple conceal marriage so as not to alienate wealthy dad), the performances veered between burlesque and straight (as if one side was playing polo and the other lawn tennis); somewhere in between a not very strong play got bashed up and even the ladies' toilets stank. □

WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 2826 Set by E.O. Parrott

Retell the plot of any famous novel, play, etc, in the words of one of the characters: Lady Bracknell explaining what happened in *The Importance*; Mr Micawber retelling *Copperfield*; Mrs Bennet with the truth about *Pride and Prejudice*; etc. Max 150 words by 29 June.

No 2823 Set by Mercy Dash

Epitaphs on Sir John Betjeman, or comments on the Poet Laureateship, after the style of Sir J.

Report By Ernest Oswald fflap

Oh! What a *clever* lot your are. Your entries made my old eyes water with vicarious, avuncular pride. I once had the honour of meeting Sir John (he was boarding a train as I got off and his overcoat brushed my knuckles) and I'm confident that, wherever he is, he's as smitten with admiration as me. I have to confess that the rhythms of *A Subaltern's Love Song* became just a *tiny* bit tedious, but I'm happy to offer all those printed ten green portraits of Her Majesty.

Sir Laureate-John, Sir Laureate-John,
Vanished and banished, to Higher Things gone,
Your Muse occupied some Parnassian suburb
Secure from Reality's unhomely hubbub;
And who's to succed you (Establishment asks),
Assuming your not-very-onerous tasks?

A Laureate sings, as befits his high Mission,
Of festivals, victories, Royal parturition;
Writes quotable lines (*without* sticking his
neck out)
In words that make sense at the Sainsbury's
checkout;
He'll win the smart critics — yet *never* offend
The faithful who read him with breaktime
Gold Blend,
From Tretchikoff prints and three-ducks-in-a-line
To blue-Denby plates on the mail-order pine:
Perished, and cherished from hither to yon,
Who's to replace you, Sir Laureate-John?

JIMMIE PEARSE

The cortege is parked on the golf course,
There's a gale blowing in from the sea,
The camera man at the lych gate
Is making a film for TV.
It's the sort of departure I'd hoped for,
Just time for a last 'cheery-bye',
Wendy and Joan are both waiting
On the Great Tennis Court in the Sky.
I've always been frightfully lucky,
Things more or less fell in my lap,
And if justice can still be poetic,
You'll get my job, Philip, old chap.

STANLEY G. SHARPLESS

With the twinkle of a bishop whose cathedral bells
are tinkling,
Although bashful as a badger with some country
set to sit in,
Yours were eyes for highway robbery, your nimble
fingers winkling
Out the bits of byway snobbery no architect is
fit in,
Turning verse, an artisan,
Rural-riding partisan,
Your poor passing heart is an
Epitaph to artistry that shan't be marred by
wrinkling.

In melancholy elegies, benign as they are breezing,
There are hints of foxy fury in your hunting
down in Surrey,
As you canter on from Camberley, perpetually
teasing
Out an irony in Dorking, as you scurrilously
hurry,
Passing house and Habitat,
Padding like a tabby-cat,
You remain the rabbit at
A greener pasture always found out infinitely
pleasing.

WILL BELLENGER

Are the curtains all drawn in the lounge, love?
Not to do them is really bad form.
Has the tongue been delivered from Harrod's?
Is the brown ale sufficient for Norm?
The hearse is to be a Lagonda.
He never did fancy a Rolls.
For Sir John has departed up yonder,
And is now on his permanent hols.
The compers exchange looks obliquely,
The talk is restrained and polite,
But those who do Hunter-Dunns weekly
Need a new living poet to 'write'.
A funeral is good for a natter,
Lots of eats, though no-one says 'Cheers',
But in spite of smoked salmon and chatter,
The Kleenex are wet with our tears.

E.O. PARROTT

He goes to a heaven where Gentlemen's Relish
Is served in the pristine, traditional pot;
Where whimsical friezes and trefoils embellish
The buildings designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott.

The older archangels are rather like Nanny;
The younger resemble Miss Joan Hunter Dunn;
And no one's allowed to disturb with a trannie
His pre-war, suburban, so-innocent fun.

Oh! The sweet-scented soap in the plated
bath-tidy!
The stockings and knickers in sensible shades!
The gin-slings with God after tennis on Friday!
The Liberty fabrics! The vaulted arcades!

He had waited for death as though death were
a tram,
And he rode like a child to the end of the line,
Where celestial tea shops serve Robertson's jam
And teacakes on platters of Déco design.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

See them at a State occasion
Cambridge sage and Oxford don,
Poets of the right persuasion,
Hoping to succeed Sir John.
Most are solemn, few are funny,
None is radical or black;
Who would do it for the money,
Let alone a butt of sack?
Tender skin needs gentle scratcher;
Poets with a leftward lean
Only madden Mrs Thatcher
And bring sorrow to the Queen.

NAOMI MARKS

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FIRST PERSON

Jeremy Lewis

Groaning bored

ALTHOUGH I WAS an utter failure as a schoolboy, I remain fascinated by both English Institutions and Institutional Fare, and hurry forward with an eager smile at the merest intimation of a drink or a meal at some sonorous establishment. What could be more enjoyable than to tuck into suet pudding at the Middle Temple, disgracing myself on their devilish port after draining the glasses of better briefed abstainers? Can earth offer any finer prospect than a second gin-and-tonic at the Garrick, surrounded — or so it seems in the heat of the moment — by the most remarkable gathering of wags ever to be assembled within four walls?

When, some years ago, we moved to Oxford — we have since beaten a grateful retreat, partly on the grounds that the place is better in its parts than as a whole, full of kindred spirits, but cumulatively somewhat smug, thin-blooded and lacking in variety — I went there with eager hopes of hilarious evenings at High Table, of reeling home with my mind aflame from the cut and thrust of feline repartee, my feeble intellect strained almost to bursting point by unwonted cerebral stimulation. I had, and still have, many excellent friends in the donnish world (and being a publisher sometimes helps) so the longed-for invitations were soon piling up and my 1962 dinner jackets had been rescued from the depths of an aged trunk. Yet what a dull, dispiriting business it inevitably turned out to be, for all the outsize intellects pulsing all about me, the fine old wines and the elaborate cracking of nuts in antique Combination Rooms. How manfully I struggled to conceal my yawns from my kindly hosts. How sparkling the Cavalry Club seemed in retrospect, how bright the dream of a Rotarian Dinner.

It has always seemed to me most unfair and unreasonable to expect dons to sparkle night after night in the manner customarily expected of them. No doubt some of them *are* absent-minded to the point of lunacy, which may not help; many of them exhibit an odd and maddening mixture of timidity and arrogance, which can manifest itself in an affectation of sublime indifference to goings on beyond the college walls; since the best conversation is often to be found among those who love gossip and know a little about a good many things and not much about anything, it stands to reason that a bibulous gathering of — say — publishers or journalists is more likely to be a riot of mirth than a diffident egyptologist, a scholar of Early Irish and a nuclear physicist eyeing one another over the acres of well-ironed linen, discussing fire regulations or complaining about the college cook (Dear God, not turbot *again*).

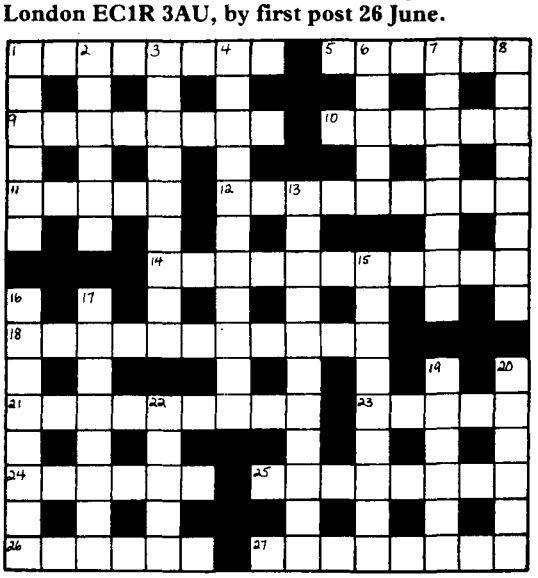
What distressed me most about dining on High Table — and about certain aspects of Oxford life — was not its unexpected dullness, but the curious indifference, even contempt, which so many of one's fellow diners seemed to feel towards the world outside: much learning and a comfortable seclusion may have brought wisdom of a kind, but all too often charity seemed in sadly short supply. Dons like nothing better than to feel that they have a finger on the pulse of power (who doesn't?) and visits from Cabinet Ministers or senior civil servants are sought with the avidity of autograph hounds; former students who have moved into Law, or the City, or even Accountancy are tolerated, while Publishers and Journalists are regarded, perhaps, as frivolous diminutions of the Oxford English Don; for people in industry, for salespeople, for the entrepreneur who builds something up from scratch, the best that can be hoped for is blank incomprehension and an embarrassed change of conversation.

Complaints that Oxford and Cambridge cultivate and pass on a damaging contempt for the industrial (let alone the post-industrial) world are wearisomely familiar and need to be treated with more than a dash of caution: Oxford and what it stands for are among the few priceless assets we have left to us and I can't but regard the freezing of a Chair or the closing of some undersubscribed centre of arcane learning as a melancholy capitulation to the darkness all about. Heaven forbid that the values of the bustling young executive should elbow out so much that makes for a civilised culture, or that, in some hideous *reductio ad absurdum* of Jowett's feud with Mark Patterson, of the claims of vocational training over those of scholarship as an end in itself, Oxford should one day establish its very own Professorship of Dry Cleaning (with special attention to egg-stained tweeds).

All of us live in tiny, self-absorbed worlds, relishing gossip and intrigues that mean little to those outside and thinking our own affairs of overriding fascination: it's probably easier for an Oxford academic to become over self-important than for a London office worker, if only because his or her world is so much more self-contained. Even so, when I remember the patronising, self-regarding tones in which so many dons (and, still more so, dons' wives) spoke of the outside world, and think not just of the drudgery of so much office and factory life, but of those quick-witted, sometimes illiterate entrepreneurs without whose very different (and equally valuable) kind of intelligence we would, no doubt, finally grind to a terminal torpor, I feel the resentment begin to rise once more. But I mustn't get too heated: after all, there might be a chance of a dinner next time I'm down, and I know I'd never refuse. . . □

Weekend Crossword 1443

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1443, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 26 June.



ACROSS

1. Optimist has painful emotion before bereavement (8)
5. Flowers as punishment (6)
9. Common place for putting meat (8)
10. I leave America and it turns into a place for films (6)
11. Nocturnal affair which ends with morning (5)
12. Showing signs of nerves when giving a girl a token of love (9)
14. Place which gives rubbish to a girl and success to a boy (11)
18. Organising a union for light industry? (11)
21. Thus an age of vulgar entertainment provides a television series (4,5)
23. Oblivion for a member with nothing (5)
24. Song which puts an article in front of people (6)
25. Put name on correspondence as indicator of place (8)
26. That which may make one dry (6)
27. Drink I put in the stake (8)

DOWN

1. Place of worship with a deity inside (6)
2. Change of scene one provides for relatives (6)
3. Historic episode which needs an extended month (4,5)
4. Relax so as to put up with an irritating person (5,2,4)
6. A craft in extra deep water (5)
7. Where a boy over six is put into baby things (8)
8. Metal plates go across broken legs (8)
13. Alarm because I do one pattern wrongly (11)
15. Part of Scotland which is the place for anticyclones? (9)
16. A messenger raises my expectations (8)
17. Confine what is characteristic in a coin (8)
19. The meaning of something foreign (6)
20. Including the sober the trunk is what provides a drink (6)
22. The fat give point to decorations (5)

SETSQUARE

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GROUPS/ MEETINGS

PUBLIC ENTERPRISE GROUP AGM. Professor Philip Bagwell on 'The End of the Line?', Thatcher's effects on Public Transport. Cole Room, Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street, SW1. Non-members welcome.

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for free pamphlets, book list, programme of activities. Public Talk Sunday 17 June 8 p.m. 'Man's Responsibility to Life'. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

German Historical Institute, London
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Prof. Dr Michael Stürmer (Erlangen)
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LISTINGS

SAT 16 JUNE

LONDON Multinationals — a strategy for control. Conference at GLC County Hall, SE1. 9.45 am. Speakers, video, workshops. All welcome. £3/£1 unwaged. **Org Labour Aid & Development Ctee.**

STOKE-ON-TRENT Gender, Leisure and Unemployment, a talk by Rosemary Deem (OU), for North Staffs Sociology Group. 10am, the Polytechnic, Leek Rd. **Details: Ursula Dobraszczyc, Dept of Sociology, N Staffs Poly, tel Stoke 412515.**

BIRMINGHAM Dayschool on Palestine. 10.30 Digbeth Civic Hall. 'Labour and Likud', 'The PLO Today', 'Life inside the Green Line'. **Org B'ham Solidarity Campaign with the Palestinian People.**

LONDON Alternative Technology in the Eighties. 10am-11pm, Architectual Association, 36 Bedford Sq, WC1. **Details: The AT Group, Faculty of Technology, Open University, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA.**

LONDON Black and Immigrant Women Claim Our Rights II: Women Count — Count Women's Work. International speakers, workshops, displays, videos, music, food, creche. 9.30-5.30. Full access for disabled; signers, loop. Camden Centre, Camden Town Hall, Euston Road, NW1. Also Sunday.

LONDON Transport for People. A conference on transport. 10.30-4.00. Congress House, Great Russell St, WC1. £2 delegates, 50p unwaged. Spkrs Bill Morris, John Prescott, Jimmy Knapp, etc. **Details: Greater London Trade Union Resource Unit, 01-403 0300 ext 287. Org SE Region TUC.**

LONDON They Shoot Writers, Don't They? A two-day conference at the ICA to examine the effects of censorship in Czechoslovakia, South Africa, Argentina, the Middle East and Britain. ICA, The Mall, SW1. £5 one day/£7.50 both days. **Org Index on Censorship.**

SUN 17 JUNE

LONDON Irish Women — Our Experience of Emigration. Conference for Irish-born & 2nd generation women. 10am-6pm, evening social, Irish Centre, Murray St, NW1. Creche, signers, limited disabled access. **Details 01-609 8916.**

MON 18 JUNE

HACKNEY Transforming Labour into a mass party. 8pm Hackney Town Hall, Mare St, E8. Spkrs Peter Hain, Ruth Gee; chair John Carr. **Org Hackney Labour Co-ordinating Ctee. Details 01-254 9434 evgs.**

TUES 19 JUNE

LONDON UN Assoc. concert 7.30pm Royal Festival Hall. Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. **Tickets £2.50-£7.50. 01-928 3191.**

WED 20 JUNE

LONDON What Is To Be Done? Talk about the road to a socialist Britain. 8pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1. Spkrs Ken Livingstone, Beatrix Campbell, Diane Abbott. £2/£1unwaged. **Org Virago Press/GLC.**

LONDON Energy Policy & the Miners' Strike. 7pm, The Coffee House pub, Beak St, W1. **Org SERA/Socialist Society.**

EWELL The Ecology Party & Disarmament — Talk by Sally Willington, Ecology Party. 7.45pm, Bourne Hall, High St, Ewell, Surrey. Wheelchair access. **Org Epsom & Ewell CND. Details: Peter, Epsom 21348.**

THUR 21 JUNE

LONDON 'The Psychology of Sexual Attraction', spkr John Willmin. 7pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1. Adm 75p, unemployed free. **Org Woman/Man Relationship Group (Progressive League).**

FRI 22 JUNE

BRADFORD 'Catherine Marshall: Feminist, Socialist, Pacifist'. Public lecture by Jo Vellacott. 7.30pm Adult Education Centre, 10 Mornington Villas, off Manningham Lane. **Details: Bradford 487054.**

CARDIFF Latin America — Nobody's Backyard. All-Wales conf in solidarity with Latin America. 10am-5.30pm, Canolfan yr Urdd, Conway Rd, Canton, Cardiff. Workshops, speakers, evening social with Latin American music. Delegates £3/Waged £2/Unwaged £1. **Details: Vera, Cardiff 32153.**

BRADFORD The Drift Towards An Authoritarian State. Socialist Society Dayschool. 10.30-4.30, Room Mezz 2, Bradford University, Richmond Rd. **Details, creche, contact Alan Carling, 13 Shetborne Rd, Bradford, tel 726236.**

OXFORD Workshop on collective theatre by 1982 Theatre Co. 2-5pm. Pegasus Theatre, Magdalen Rd, Oxford. £3/£2 unwaged. Please book. Looking at texts by Dario Fo/Franca Rame.

SAT 23 JUNE

PILGRIMS' WAY (Wye to Canterbury) Walk to raise funds for Battersea Arts Centre. **Details: Diana Warden, Friends of BAC 01-223 6557/8/9.**

LONDON '1984 — A Celebration of Women'. Review Our Past. Write Our Future, NCCL Women's Rights Conf. City University. Spkrs incl Dora Russell, Pratibha Parmar, Bea Campbell. **Send s.a.e. to NCCL, 21 Tabard St, SE1 4LA for info.**

LONDON Jumble Sale. 2pm onwards. Edison Community Centre, Edison Rd, Crouch End, N8. Clothes, books, records, toys, etc. Admission 5p. **Org Hornsey CND.**

FORTHCOMING

25-29 JUNE LONDON Energy Week at Polytechnic of South Bank **Details: Ms Chris Richards, Centre for Energy Studies, Borough Road, SE1 01-928 8989 x 2399.**

1 JULY NOTTINGHAM Mass Trespass at Chilwell Ordnance Depot — 103rd US base. **Details: Reclaim Chilwell, c/ o Nottingham CND, Environmental Factshop, 15 Goosegate, Nottingham NG1 1FE. 0602 581948.**

27-29 JULY NOTTINGHAM Shelter Annual Housing Conference University of Nottingham. **Details: Tim Mars, Shelter, 157 Waterloo Rd, SE1 8FX. 01-633 9377.**

12-14 SEPT BRADFORD 'Peace Studies in Higher Education' Conf. org. for those who wish to write/speak on their experience of Peace Studies teaching and research and those who wish to learn. **Contact: James O'Connell, School of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, W. Yorkshire. 0274 733455.**

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ATTRACTIVE, WARM, fairly tall, cultured lady seeks either sex, possible Continental, for companion holiday etc. Mutual interests books, TV, late 60s — early 70s, with phone. Box 8613.

BASICALLY CHEERFUL North London man, early fifties, seeks lady friend to share a joke or two and possibly a few other life enhancing activities. Box 8446.

BATTERED, BRUISED and bloodied but not cowed by life I need a peaceful gentle girl for friendship and a wife. I'm hardly goodlooking, a lifeworn 38, with artistic leanings and slightly overweight. I like walking and talking and drinking white wine, I love high mountain places and days with sunshine. I'm exiled in Bristol but hope still survives of finding a girl friend to share the rest of our lives. Box 8610.

BEARDED EDUCATIONAL Bureaucrat, 40, separated, smoker, complex (intellectual/sensual/spiritual), interests include: theatre, cinema, literature, psychology, feminism, seeks tall, vivacious, compatible lady, London. Photo? Box 8568.

COMPOSER/PIANIST, 41, seeks companionship of interesting and enterprising female for help with endeavours. Slightly disabled, but still trying. Box 8618.

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EDUCATED, WELL-BRED, tall Indian, aged 44, divorced, various interests, seeks correspondence from ladies irrespective of race. Visits welcomed later. Returnable photo please. Box 8505.

EXTREMELY ATTRACTIVE, English graduate, 30s, Jewish, divorced, compassionate, curious, two young children, loves life, literature, languages, seeks partner to build happiness and home. Box 8574.

FEMALE CIVIL Servant, 21, recently experienced unfortunate emotional episodes. Attractive 'Calimero' look-a-like. Any sex, creed, colour, shape considered. Box 8571.

GAY MALE (30), energetic, tall, slim, intelligent, affectionate and attractive, University Lecturer, seeks similar (21+), for sincere and enduring relationship. London. Photo appreciated. Box 8595.

GENTLEMAN, 43, 6ft, travelled, educated, honest, easily managed, kind-hearted, seeks younger lady, similarly disposed, to search for redeeming vices, even marriage and babies. Box 8559.

HAPPY, HUMOROUS, intelligent, professional man, wide interests, 34, seeks lively, independent lady for fun and games, and antidote to overwork. Weekdays. London. Photo? A.L.A. Box 8596.

I AM looking for a University graduated gentleman, aged 50-60, slim 6ft, anyone? I am educated, independent, very attractive, sports-minded lady. Box 8612.

IDEALISTIC, ARTICULATE, graduate male, 33, interests include freelance writing, adventurous travel, good food, new ideas, seeks compatible, socialist lady, with sense of humour who prefers commitment to affairs. I'm in Bristol, where are you? Box 8611.

IF YOU treasure independence yet feel life is about sharing, are male, 30-45, talker, non-smoker and sympathise with CND and vegetarianism, please write Box 8564.

INTELLIGENT, CARING, attractive professional London woman, mid-40s, good sense of humour, seeks man share arts, cinema, travel, wining, dining. Sense humour & sensitivity essential. Box 8619.

INTROVERT HIPPY, 22, seeks gentle lady, for sincere relationship. London/South East. Box 8562.

ISN'T DURHAM boring when you're fortyish, unattached, sociable, with many interests but few single friends? Anyone in same boat on river here (incidentally glorious) contact Box 8617.

ISOLATED, BOOKISH bachelor, 47, unemployed, working-class roots, seeks female friend, any age, to simply write to. Sense of humour, please, though with serious undertones. Box 8569.

LADY IN early forties, interests music and books, seeks caring, unattached man for friendship/love/companionship. London or South East. Box 8581.

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LET ME make your summer special. Me — professional man, 47, divorced, tall, lean, fit, pleasant bearded features, sensuous, educated, youthful mind and body, sensitive, caring, cultured, humorous. Interests: classical music, theatre, books, human interaction and laughter. You — 35-45, tall, shapely, warm, feminine, well-educated (graduate?) and well-groomed. Above all you should need **me.** Box 8614.

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MANCHESTER/SHEFFIELD area, male lecturer, socialist, late thirties, tall, slim and balding, seeks intelligent, lively female companionship, late 20s to 30s, to share wide ranging interests. Box 8589.

MATURE STUDENT, 32, black, average intelligence, warm-hearted, feels lonely & shy, music & outings lover, seeks sensitive, sincere, understanding woman for friendship & romance etc., 20-35, any nationality. Photo & tel. no please. Box 8475.

MIDLANDS-BASED man, forties, graduate in professional occupation, not particularly academic but various interests, divorced, seeks outgoing woman for caring relationship. Box 8582.

NON-SEXIST MALE socialist, 30 (I'm a Geoff Capes look-alike), wishes to meet a caring woman, 22-42, in the N. Wales/Merseyside/Cheshire areas. I have many interests. I believe that personality is much more important than looks. I will answer all the letters that I receive. Box 8573.

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REAL RAVING Looney, 37, left-wing, likes music of all kinds, politics, God and indoor and outdoor games. Sensuous but hath no beauty, seeks sensuous woman (25-40). I have a good disability income and also like dining, travel. Box 8570.

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TWO BRIGHT AND LIVELY FRIENDS, academic and psychologist, 30s, male and female, are sure that there are many similar men and women who would like to widen their social circle. We are building up a network of single people (strictly 25-45) in North London to run on a personal voluntary basis, with interests in cinema, theatre, politics, food, good conversation and fun. First meeting at end of June. Write with your interests and suggestions. Box 8577.

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WRITER, PRESENTABLE, solvent, own home, no ties, generally left, seeks 50 plus London lady, for real relationship, not games. Gladly exchange photos. Box 8565.

YORKSHIRE/LANCASHIRE area. Youthful, divorced woman, professional, non-academic, late forties, would welcome man similar age, to share love, laughter, music, art, walking, talking. Box 8620.

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Printed by Benham & Co Ltd, Sheepen Place, Colchester CO3 3LH. Published by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Co. Ltd at 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Second class postage paid at New York NY

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